



## DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EDD)

### Perspectives on the EdD from Academics at English Universities

Poole, Brian

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE EdD FROM ACADEMICS AT ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITIES

Brian David Poole

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of Bath  
Department of Education  
April 2012

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I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, contains no material previously published or written in any medium by another person, except where appropriate reference has been made.

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Brian Poole

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The experience of beginning to map out an EdD thesis, early in 2009, called to mind Alan Brownjohn's poem "Sporting Event". The poem's setting is the Centre Court at Wimbledon. Pitted against each other are "young Kenny Trabner of Australia" (immaculate shorts, crew-cut, "playing the ruthless tennis they play now") and "the Old Fox" (full-length pre-war flannels, bald, "green eye-shade on his forehead above his bifocals"). As one might expect, things do not go well for the Old Fox. Trabner wins the first set 6-0, and the second set by the same margin. All too soon, it is 5-0 in the third set and 40-0 in its sixth game, with Trabner serving. But the Old Fox has one thing going for him: "the crowd is on his side". Hence, when he "pulls out from the pocket of his flannel trousers an ancient matchlock pistol" and shoots Trabner, just as the latter is throwing up the ball to serve for match point, "the crowd is on ten thousand delirious, cheering, swooning, feet." Since Trabner is dead, the umpire awards the match to the Old Fox.

The successful completion of a doctorate four-fifths of the way through one's working life (bald, varifocal lenses, no eye shade) does not normally require the discharging of firearms, but it is not easy, and I would like to thank those who supported me even when it felt to me as though I was match point down. Emeritus Professor Jeff Thompson has, from the beginning, been a reassuring, resourceful and cheerful supervisor. Even before Dr Mary Hayden joined Jeff as a co-supervisor she frequently passed to me valuable references or ideas, and since then she has redoubled her efforts. Despite my rambling, self-absorbed emails, Jeff and Mary have continued to coax and steer me onwards with great patience and forbearance. For this and much else I am very grateful indeed.

The hapless EdD student spends hours in what must appear to the observer to be a kind of listless trance when, quite clearly, s/he should be doing the washing up or painting the garden shed. I am very greatly indebted to my wife, Paiwan, who has patiently borne my bouts of lugubriousness, tiredness and even absence over the past six years, while only once – at least openly – questioning my sanity in passing so many hours grinding coffee beans, staring out of the window, and otherwise ignoring the open and powered-up laptop and the strew of books and papers on the kitchen table. If anyone who reads this is considering the possibility of registering as a part-time doctoral student (for any doctoral award), do contemplate the fate of Sisyphus very

thoroughly before taking a decision. A doctoral thesis pushed uphill for long periods of time can exhaust you, escape from your grasp, and then roll downhill causing injury to yourself and your loved ones.

Singapore  
April 2012

## ABSTRACT

Since first appearing in British universities during the early 1990s, the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree has spread rapidly through the UK higher education sector. However, despite the existence of a single set of Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) descriptors for doctoral level achievement, some in academia have always been willing to describe the EdD, either openly or in private, as inferior to the PhD. This thesis endeavours (through a wide-ranging questionnaire completed anonymously by 27 academics from a total of 16 English universities, and follow-up interviews with seven individuals selected from the original sample) to discover how a sample of those who teach on such programmes (EdD academics) view the EdD, in general terms. For instance, it seeks to ascertain how widespread among EdD academics is the notion that the EdD does not reach the 'gold standard' represented by the PhD in Education.

As data collection proceeds from the questionnaire to the interviews, the focus narrows to three key topics: specific characteristics of the EdD as compared with the PhD in Education (in terms, for example, of learning experience, programme aims, and modes of assessment); strengths, weaknesses and purposes of the EdD *viva voce* examination; and the concept of 'originality' as operationalised by EdD academics/examiners in deciding whether or not an EdD candidate/thesis displays 'doctorateness'. A range of informed and sometimes forthright views from EdD academics on these matters is recorded.

On the basis of data analysis and interpretation, the thesis concludes with proposals for further, more extensive research, and a call for one of two courses of action: either the abolition of the EdD, or the appointment of a committee to review EdD practices nationally, and to recommend ways of strengthening EdD rigour and reputation.

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## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED):**

According to its website (see References) “The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) is a national effort aimed at strengthening the education doctorate, or Ed.D.”

### **Credential inflation:**

To paraphrase (change of tense only) from Sanderson (2001: 95): once more individuals attain credentials, they decline in value, i.e., they cannot ‘purchase’ the same type of job they did before.

### **Credentialism:**

A term used to mean slavish attention to credentials (certificates, qualifications) in the selection of individuals to fill available jobs.

### **Doctorateness or doctoralness:**

A concept much debated which might be understood to mean the attributes displayed by either a candidate or a thesis passable at doctoral level. Some scholars prefer the second term because it adheres more closely to the rules of English morphology (adjective + -ness), but the first term is more widely used (see Trafford & Leshem 2009)

### **New Route PhD:**

According to its website (see References) this programme, in which the Universities of Hull, Kent and Newcastle are involved, along with seven others, offers “postgraduate training which combines research with a structured programme of advanced training in discipline-specific and generic skills.” Its Chair, Dr. Paul Seedhouse, states that “the New Route PhD is a national initiative to provide PhD students with the highest quality of taught materials and practical experience alongside advanced research” <http://www.newroutephed.ac.uk/chair.html>

### **Professional doctorate:**

A generic term which is widely used to denote doctorates in various discipline areas (Business Administration, Education, Engineering) deemed to have a greater orientation to ‘professional practice’ than the PhD and to produce ‘scholarly professionals’ rather than ‘professional scholars’. However, not all those in HE in Britain regard the term as helpful or well founded.

### **Rugby Team:**

See Vitae below.

**Vitae:**

This is a UK-based organization whose Impact and Evaluation Group, formerly known as the Rugby Team, has a mission to “propose a meaningful and workable way of evaluating the effectiveness of skills development in early career researchers.”

**A NOTE ON PRONOUNS**

Generally in this text I have used ‘s/he’ and ‘his/her’ as default third person subject and object pronouns. This is done partly so as to protect absolutely the anonymity of those who completed the questionnaire or were interviewed via Google Talk. However, I also regard it as a simple way of indicating (for example when making generalisations about ‘the EdD candidate’) that both genders are included.

## INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1990s I enrolled as a part-time MPhil/PhD student in applied linguistics at a British university. Despite successful transfer to PhD status, for various reasons (being required to take on extra responsibility at the – different – UK university where I worked; then getting divorced; then moving on 'unpaid leave' to a demanding overseas post; then my supervisor's unexpected early retirement), I did not complete my doctorate. Instead, in 2002, when I returned to my 'permanent' job, I tidied up the work already done and, guided by a senior colleague as supervisor, successfully submitted it for the award of MPhil. The examination process included a viva voce examination, with an internal and external examiner.

Several years passed. My personal and professional lives stabilised, and I felt that I had recovered my equilibrium and was capable of making a second attempt to acquire a doctorate. I reasoned that study towards an EdD would widen my horizons, divert me from paths I had followed for many years (language, linguistics), and steer me along new byways, such as those leading to research and teaching on higher education policy and the internationalization of higher education. I would also have the opportunity to sharpen my understanding of research methods, to get to grips with published research on higher education, and, potentially, to publish in a greater variety of refereed journals. I was also attracted by the notion of incremental progression towards a doctorate, through assessed modules and a thesis shorter than that required for PhD. This seemed to be suited to my needs as someone studying part-time while working full-time. See Taylor (2008, pp.67-68) for evidence that this mindset is not unusual.

During 2005 I searched the Internet for British universities which offered an EdD, finding that many did so. Often their websites summarised the main differences between studying for a PhD in Education and an EdD. Most universities argued that while a PhD was a 'research doctorate' and an EdD was a 'professional doctorate', the two awards were equivalent in terms of the standard of work required to attain them. The PhD entailed a long thesis (of 80,000 to 100,000 words) on a single topic, while the EdD consisted of a number of taught modules (usually four or more) assessed in each case by written assignment, plus a thesis of perhaps 40,000 or 50,000 words. It was sometimes suggested (University of Exeter website) that EdDs were intended for

mid-career education professionals wanting to know more about research, whereas PhDs were for those intending to become professional researchers (see also Gregory 1997). I felt that I belonged to the first category, and I registered as a University of Bath EdD student in 2006.

I do not regret my decision to enrol on an EdD programme. Nevertheless, I have at times in the past few years found myself confronted by, and exercised by, the notion that perhaps an EdD is not, after all, universally regarded as ‘equivalent’ to a PhD. Learning that I was about to begin study towards an EdD, a senior colleague from Australia (with a PhD) offered me good wishes and encouragement. But he also wrinkled up his nose and suggested that an EdD wasn’t *really* in the same league as a PhD. Internationally he is not alone in this view. The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (see References) saw the need (during phase one of its work to “re-design the EdD” in the USA) for “developing a distinct professional practice doctorate”, but was uncertain whether to use the term EdD, partly because “the EdD is perceived as ‘PhD-lite’”. This view of the EdD as inferior to the PhD seems to be especially prevalent in North America (see, for instance, Allen et al. 2002 on prospects for the EdD in Canada). However, similar views are sometimes expressed in Australia, where during a single decade the number of programmes leading to professional doctorates rose dramatically from 1 in 1990 to 131 in 2001 (Boud & Tennant 2006, p.295) and where, quite recently, the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations called for certain “coursework doctorates...to be deemed equivalent to a masters degree” (CAPA 2010, p.4). In the Republic of Ireland (Loxley & Seery 2012, p.8) there seems to be a “somewhat profound” silence in national policy documents regarding the future of what is there called the DEd.

In Britain, many academics and EdD students and graduates are aware that in some quarters, mistrust exists of the value and standing of the EdD, and of other so-called ‘professional doctorates’: deprecating comments, for instance, can be found in scholarly papers, newspaper articles or online (see, for instance, Gill 2009). Yet generally such views seem to be swept under the carpet rather than discussed openly. The present research enquiry (thesis) is, among other things, my contribution to more open discussion.

As this thesis proceeds it does so through a ‘narrowing strategy’ (see pp.58-59) in which

responses by 27 subjects to a wide-ranging 38-item questionnaire serve as the basis for more tightly-focused interviews with seven individuals selected from the original sample. Three research questions were formulated, and these address the distinctiveness of the EdD (particularly when seen in comparison to the PhD in Education):

RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?

RQ2: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination?

RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of 'originality' or 'original contribution' in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?

The rationale and discussion of these questions is developed in Chapter Two. Data of relevance to these research questions is collected from academics who are themselves teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England.

I begin the task of writing the present thesis armed with - or perhaps hamstrung by - my own experiences, cognitive style, and prejudices. Accordingly, to help the reader evaluate what is offered here, I attempt at various points in the text to identify factors in my professional background and personal make-up and biography which may influence the interpretations I provide and the conclusions I draw. This is, I think, especially important since the present thesis is constructed, to a considerable extent, on the basis of qualitative data subjected to analysis through an interpretative approach to educational research (Verma & Mallick 1999, pp.29-30).

Before explaining the concerns and parameters of my own research, however, it is important to establish the wider context in which it takes shape. For example, new forms of doctorate and changes to doctoral education have emerged (in Britain but also internationally) which mean the purpose, acquisition and assessment of doctorates are no longer as straightforward as they may once have appeared. This we shall do in Chapter One, below, which offers a wide-ranging review of recent scholarly literature of relevance to contemporary doctoral education.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Literature Review**

The aim of the following review of scholarly literature on doctoral education is to provide the reader with a sense of the bigger picture within which the EdD has developed and continues to operate in universities in England. It will be noted that great attention is paid to widely-cited work by Park on doctoral education (Park 2003, 2005, 2007) and that – as noted on page 16 below – Park’s work provides the topics and headings which make up this chapter of the thesis. From a reading of published work on doctoral education emerge the various issues which are eventually investigated in the questionnaire (see 4.1 and Appendix B below), and Table 1 (p.44 below) sets out the origins in the literature of each of the three research questions to which answers are pursued in detail through the Google Talk interviews (see 3.1.5, 4.2 and 4.3 below). The following literature review does not, however, simply serve the purpose of surfacing particular issues which have attracted the attention of researchers and practitioners in doctoral education. Just as importantly, it is presented so that the reader can obtain a sense of the wider context in which the EdD in English universities has taken shape, and can recognise some of the challenges which EdD programmes appear to face if they are to retain and extend their appeal and credibility in the coming decades.

#### **1.1 Recent Developments in Doctoral Education**

Throughout the world the last two decades have seen significant change in the conception and delivery of doctoral education. Although Green (2009, p.240) is no doubt correct in casting doubt on the notion that the identity of the PhD was ever as homogeneous as is sometimes imagined or 'remembered', nevertheless with its “big book thesis” (Dunleavy 2003) or *magnum opus* (Cowen 1997, p.185) and its general reliance on the “master-apprentice model” for supervision (Kehm 2008, p.20), what might be called the traditional PhD almost certainly remains the doctoral model which predominates in the minds of the educated general public in Britain and internationally. However, new forms of doctorate have been emerging in recent years, prompting widespread debate about the definition of doctoral level (Gale 2003, Park 2007). Key drivers of these new developments in doctoral education include globalization (Nerad & Trzyna 2008, p.300), increasing emphasis on employability skills (Park 2007, p.193),

and the pressure exerted on universities by governments and quality assurance agencies to improve doctoral completion rates and speeds (Neumann 2009, p.218).

In reviewing current trends in doctoral education around the world, Nerad & Trzyna (2008, p.304) point out that "doctoral education for the sake of curiosity, exploration, or the love for a specific field seems to be disappearing." Instead, as the twenty-first century unfolds, doctoral students find themselves striving, in a globalised world, to differentiate themselves from others in the job market. Obtaining a doctorate is, for many, not a labour of love, but an exercise in "positional competition" (Brown, 2000, p.633) in which the overriding aim is to influence positively "how one stands relatively to others" (loc. cit.) in terms of credentials. Yet at the same time, as Usher (2002, p.145) notes, those who aspire to assume prime positions in the 'knowledge economy' must have not only educational qualifications born from a commitment to credentialism, but also "soft transferable and flexible skills." For 'knowledge workers' it may well be true that "possessing a doctoral degree is no longer a passport to a job for life" (Usher, loc. cit.).

Recently (see, for example, Lee & Danby 2011), there have been several publications drawing attention to both existing practice in doctoral education internationally, and to changes which are either being contemplated or implemented in the emerging context of globalized competition for jobs through "soft skills...to do with problem-solving, collaborative work, leadership and knowledge application" (Usher, 2002, p.145). For instance, both Nerad & Heggelund (2008) and Powell & Green (2007) offer collections of papers from academics surveying doctoral education in a wide variety of countries across the world. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the picture is mixed, with some countries apparently clinging to conceptions of the doctorate which have served them for decades, while others are actively seeking to revise and extend forms of doctoral study open to potential students. This disparity in approach has produced, in itself, a degree of misunderstanding or mistrust internationally. For instance, in summarising how the so-called 'Bologna process' has contributed to the debate on the future of doctoral education, Bitusikova (2009, pp.206-207) notes that the trend towards greater diversity of awards is not welcomed in all quarters. Most notably, she suggests that "the emergence of professional doctorates in the UK and Ireland is observed in parts of continental Europe with suspicion." This is evident in

documentation emanating from the European University Association (EUA), in which references to 'professional doctorates' often occur in close proximity to cautionary words about the need to maintain 'standards' and 'quality'. Indeed, there are also suggestions (EUA 2007, p.14) that rather than being called professional "doctorates", perhaps "different titles" could be used so as to differentiate from the PhD. Loxley & Seery (2012, p.9) see the Republic of Ireland's policy makers as displaying "lacklustre interest (or understanding) in professional doctorates" and appear to regard this as a state of mind induced by the EUA's evident reservations.

Perhaps developments in Britain should, therefore, be seen in the context of debate about the future of doctoral education internationally. However, since the focus of this thesis (in order to make it researchable for a single individual based overseas) is on education doctorates in English, not British, universities, we shall now direct our attention to developments and debates closer to home.

As we have seen, the PhD was first adopted in Britain at Oxford University (actually as the DPhil – see Jackson and Tinkler 2001), with the first two awards taking place in the 1919-1920 academic year (Simpson 1983, p.164). Only ten years later, in the 1929-1930 academic year, 377 PhDs were awarded at 19 universities around the United Kingdom. Moving closer to the present day, in 2005 (according to HEFCE statistics) approximately 13,000 PhD awards were made, although it is not immediately clear whether this figure actually includes other doctoral awards. The PhD is therefore very well established in the public consciousness, and it probably remains the paradigm case of the doctorate for both academics and the population at large.

Nevertheless, the EdD (or education doctorate) also has a considerable history - though this is less true for the UK. The first EdD was awarded at Harvard University in 1921 (Wellington et al. 2005, p.7), although it can be argued that EdDs originated in the Doctor of Pedagogy programme which commenced at the University of Toronto in 1894 (Allen et al. 2002, p.205; Taylor 2008, p.68). It was, however, many decades before any such programme came into being in Britain, at Bristol University in the early 1990s. In comparison with the PhD, therefore, the EdD is relatively little known and even British academics (if from other areas of specialisation) may not always be aware of its existence. Indeed, published research about doctoral education not



infrequently contains statements such as the following: “This...may also apply to the ‘professional doctorate’, although there is a shortage of reported research in this area” (Wellington et al. 2005, p.182). Whatever aspect of doctoral education is discussed, there is naturally (because of its greater longevity in Britain and its ubiquity internationally) much more research on the PhD than on the EdD - or indeed on other so-called 'professional doctorates', such as the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) or the Doctorate of Engineering (EngD).

Emeritus Professor Chris Park, Director of Lancaster University's Graduate School from 2001 to 2009, has been a prominent figure among researchers investigating current and ongoing changes in doctoral education in Britain (Park 2003, 2005, 2007). In addition to his extensive publications, his authority is evidenced by his links to, and leadership of, research and debate carried out under the aegis of such organisations as Vitae (formerly the Rugby Team) – see references - and the Higher Education Academy (see, for instance Kulej & Park 2008). His work raises numerous issues which need to be resolved if doctoral education in Britain is to emerge from what is evidently a period of change driven by a clearer rationale for (a) the variety of doctoral awards offered; (b) the forms of quality assurance employed; and (c) the methods of assessment in place. I shall therefore use Park’s work to provide a framework for a description of key changes in doctoral education in Britain over the last two decades or so.

Park (2005, p.192ff.) identifies five key factors which, in his view, are driving change to doctoral education in Britain. These are: a growing emphasis on skills and training; greater attention to doctoral completion rates; a shift in perceptions about what constitutes good supervision; a revision in ideas about both the process and focus of doctoral assessment; and increasing attention to benchmarking. I shall deal with each of these factors in turn, pointing out ways in which they appear to be impacting programme design, delivery and assessment at doctoral level.

#### *1.1.1 Greater emphasis on skills and research training*

In Germany the traditional template for doctoral education has always been the "master-apprentice model" (Kehm 2008, p.20), but until recently practice in Britain too has not been so different, with the PhD student coming to "sit at the feet" of a "great thinker" (Dunleavy 2003). That is to say, progress towards a doctorate has been achieved partly through discussion between

master and apprentice, and through the submission of draft thesis chapters to the supervisor for critical commentary. However, more recently questions have been raised about what should properly be seen as the primary product of doctoral education. Should it be the doctoral graduate or the final content of her/his thesis (Lee & Boud 2009, p.13; Park 2005, p.196)? Growth in personal skills may perhaps be less likely through a mode of learning which carries implications of submissiveness and obedience; hence it could be argued that the master-apprentice model entails the notion that the successfully completed thesis is the goal of doctoral study. Typically in Germany the supervisor/'master' was in a position of considerable *de facto* power over the student/'apprentice'. The latter often depended on the former for part-time teaching or other paid work (perhaps as a personal assistant) in order to make ends meet while doctoral study continued (Kehm 2008, loc. cit.). Furthermore, the supervisor acted as the main examiner and selected a second examiner. As Kehm (2008, p.21) puts it, "the position of a doctoral candidate was one of high personal dependence."

In past decades, the situation in Britain was rather similar. One notorious example (albeit not at doctoral level) concerns the late novelist Kingsley Amis, who alleged that when he studied for a BLitt at Oxford from 1948 onwards, his supervisor Lord David Cecil never met him formally at all, since he was rarely to be found in college. The single meeting between them occurred when Amis happened to encounter Lord Cecil in a book-shop and persuaded him to sign the requisite supervision form. In due course Lord Cecil surprisingly materialised to chair the viva voce examination (assisted only by a junior don from his own college) and failed the thesis (Amis 1991, pp.102-106). Such a cavalier attitude towards the ethics of supervision would be impossible today, but the supervisor does retain considerable influence over a candidate's doctoral success or failure, since (amongst other things) s/he may either make the final decision in choosing an external examiner, or provide strong recommendations to those (Head of Department, Dean of the Graduate School) who formally do so (Delamont et al. 2004, p.144). Furthermore, as Delamont et al. (loc. cit.) also make clear, the choice of external examiner may be a prime factor in the success or "disaster" of the final outcome. This is an issue we shall return to, since if the result of years of doctoral study can be positively or negatively influenced by the appointment of a single individual, serious questions arise about the reliability of the assessment process.

The last two decades in Britain have seen the master-apprentice model - or a version thereof - somewhat eroded by the emergence of graduate schools (Green 2008, p.56), which have, of course, long been the site of doctoral education in the USA. For instance, Green (op. cit) states that in 1995 thirty-three UK universities had graduate schools, but that by 2003-2004 two-thirds of universities had them. Graduate schools in British universities include those established at institutional level (for instance, University College London Graduate School); those which are Faculty-based (such as the Humanities and Social Sciences Graduate School, University of Bath); and those at Department/School level (Graduate School of Education, Bristol University).

Regardless of the level at which a graduate school is established (Department, Faculty or University), it is possible that this widespread and quite radical development may stem from a shift in thinking about the nature of doctoral education. Green (op. cit., pp.56-57) acknowledges that "there is a range of models of what constitutes a graduate school and what role it performs", but then goes on to list some general characteristics. For instance, he suggests that when graduate schools are created, units concerned with quality assurance and student monitoring often form part of the new school's structure. Furthermore, many graduate schools "are responsible for research training programs and in some cases for the training of supervisors." One might draw the conclusion, therefore, that the move to graduate schools in many British universities was largely motivated by a desire to provide a uniformly good doctoral experience for students (through quality assurance); to listen attentively to doctoral students' concerns and to keep a close eye on their progress (student monitoring); to formalise ways in which doctoral students gain awareness of good research practices (research training programmes); and to provide formal support for supervisors (training of supervisors). Some of these points will be dealt with later (for example, section 1.3 below addresses supervision in greater depth), but looked at in the round they appear to suggest an increased concern in universities to provide an appropriate and consistent research grounding to students, and to see supervision - hitherto regarded as open to any academic who had themselves completed a doctorate (Park 2005, p.195) - as a complex activity to be undertaken only by those who have formally acquired the requisite set of skills.

This generally positive view of the genesis of graduate schools in Britain is somewhat undercut

by those (such as Leonard & Becker 2009, p.73) who see their emergence more in terms of universities' self-interest in scoring well in the erstwhile quinquennial Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The steps in this argument (Leonard & Becker: loc. cit.) go as follows: the RAE's criteria included reference to the importance of "a thriving research culture"; the 'score' arrived at by the RAE largely determined funding to each university from central government; therefore many universities set up graduate schools as part of their strategy to provide evidence of a strong research culture. However, there have been similar developments elsewhere in Europe, where higher education funding models are not necessarily comparable. Bitusikova (2009, p.203) surveying developments in the doctorate across members of the European University Association (EUA), notes on the basis of a 2006 survey that sixteen out of a thirty-seven countries reported that "their institutions have introduced doctoral, graduate or research schools" (albeit alongside "traditional individual training"). Bitusikova (loc. cit.) also refers to the need to "achieve a *critical mass* of doctoral candidates" (my emphasis) - a somewhat notional term - but in addition cites the apparent belief in European universities as a whole that "organisation of doctoral education in a structured way can reduce completion time...and increase completion rates." It is possible, therefore, to conclude that the recent emergence of graduate schools in Britain (and in Europe as a whole) was driven, at least to some extent, by a concern to provide a more predictable, principled and productive experience to doctoral students - in other words, a better research training.

However, in addition to this, changes in British doctoral education have probably also been triggered by debates about the kinds of skills which doctoral graduates should ideally possess. Contributions to such debates have often raised the notion of 'employability' and juxtaposed this with references to the 'knowledge economy'. As Brown & Lauder (2006, p.46) note, "the protagonists of the knowledge economy have focused much of their attention on issues of individual employability", since employer complaints have tended to report their perception that "many of those entering the workforce, *including the highly qualified*, lack the social and self-management skills that are required" (my emphasis). Implicit here is another shift in the modalities of doctoral education. Whereas in Britain fifty years ago the 'traditional' or 'classical' PhD was generally pursued by a student working closely with a single supervisor, with the doctoral process and product left largely to the discretion of relatively autonomous universities

and their dons, it is now easy to see a range of stakeholders influencing doctoral education. For instance, Park (2007, p.8) lists eight stakeholders (students, supervisors, academic departments, institutions, disciplines, funding bodies, employers, and the nation) and offers a brief explanation of the perspective of each. Of the view of employers he states (loc. cit.) that "doctoral graduates can offer skilled and creative human capital, and access to innovative thinking and knowledge transfer"; and of the nation's stake in doctoral education he writes of "the obvious benefits of an active community of scholars engaged in doctoral level research include enhanced creativity and innovation, and the development of a skilled workforce and of intellectual capital and knowledge transfer, which drive the knowledge economy and are engines of the growth of capital."

Yet some see things differently. Usher (2002, p.145) suggests that "doctoral education is now right in the middle of a fierce contestation that pits the traditional values of the academy against the new values of the knowledge economy", while Kendall (2002, pp.138-139) – arguing from a sociological perspective - sees the terms “knowledge society” and “knowledge worker” as (amongst other things) going hand in hand with a simplification of the structure of doctoral education, in which those who “audit” through “the imposition of mechanisms of calculation” have engineered a re-shaping and re-sizing of the doctorate to meet the requirements of university “managers” and “industry stakeholders”. Lee (2009, p.6) also implicitly demonstrates the distaste or mistrust felt by some academics in this area, by setting two viewpoints in opposition as follows:

*...professional doctorates could be viewed as a positive development offering opportunities to student professionals who would not otherwise have sought doctoral study. On the other hand, it could also be suggested that they are a reaction to the pressures of international market forces and the knowledge economy.*

This second perspective (professional doctorates as the product of market forces and the knowledge economy) shares some affinities with the view (see, particularly, Gibbons et al. 1994) that in recent times knowledge production has been driven by forces hitherto much less influential in the field of research - such as trans- or inter-disciplinarity, the involvement of multiple ‘stakeholders’ (governments, private companies, university consortia), and an increasing emphasis on the application of research.

It may be that the origins of the “contestation” between “the academy” and “the knowledge

economy” can be traced longer ago than either Usher or Lee appear to realise. Emphasis on the potential economic benefits to a nation of a more highly educated workforce is sometimes thought to be entirely a product of the contemporary situation in which nations try to 'outsmart' each other in competition for the high-skilled, high-waged jobs held to be characteristic of a knowledge economy (Brown & Lauder, loc. cit.). Yet we can see the rudiments of such arguments being put almost fifty years ago in the highly influential Robbins Report (Robbins 1963, p.73), as a case was constructed for an expansion of the UK higher education sector:

*...there is a broad connection between the size of the stock of trained manpower in a community and its level of productivity per head... in modern societies the skills required...are increasingly those conferred by higher education.*

Perhaps one important distinction, however, between arguments put by Robbins and those deployed in the early twenty-first century is that while Robbins appears to have seen the higher education of a greater number *per se* as advantageous to the national economy, it is now argued that many very highly educated (PhD) graduates are too narrowly specialised and are lacking in areas such as teamwork skills, presentational skills, and communication skills which would ease the transition into employment. This is significant because, as Park (2007, p.17) points out, only a third or so of doctoral graduates go into academic careers. The rest acquire "a wide variety of jobs mainly across the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors" (loc. cit.).

The 'knowledge economy' discourse took hold during the period of widespread economic growth from the early 1990s to the early 2000s, and it was at the beginning of the period - probably to some extent propelled into being by the influence of that discourse on universities (Lee 2009, p.16) - that professional doctorates (including the EdD) first appeared in Britain. As Taylor (2008, p.67) argues, the emergence of the professional doctorate can be seen as:

*...a response to criticism from employers that PhD students lacked the wider applied subject knowledge, practical experience and generic skills necessary in the workplace. This concern became increasingly relevant in the 1980s, and 1990s, as the opportunities for doctoral students to find employment within the academic sector began to reduce.*

Definitions of the term 'professional doctorate' generally refer to this “wider applied subject knowledge” in one way or another. Consider, for example, Lee (2009, p.6):

*An all encompassing definition is difficult given the range of professional doctorate awards and individual subject characteristics. However, professional practice, the development and/or application of expertise directly in the practice setting and*

*practitioner research are central to professional doctorate activities... Professional doctorates are associated with the acquisition of knowledge and research skills, to further advance or enhance professional practice.*

Overall, in the areas of research training and skills for employability, therefore, two related changes appear to have taken place in doctoral education over the last two decades. The conviction that successful national economies will henceforth be those which are able to construct a workforce comprising highly educated, highly skilled 'knowledge workers' (the "symbolic analysts - who solve, identify, and broker new problems" - Reich, 2006, p.308) has shifted the focus to the doctoral graduate, rather than the doctoral thesis, as end-product. As Boud & Lee (2009, p.1) rightly suggest, the very change in terminology from "postgraduate research" to "doctoral education" in much published material is charged with significance. The same authors (loc. cit.) see the current popularity of the latter term as indicating that the focus is now on the people (doctoral graduates) and their skills, rather than on "research outputs". The second change - related to the first - is well encapsulated in the following from Lee & Boud (2009, p.21):

*In a succession of discursive shifts, postgraduate research becomes a space of pedagogy, construed primarily in terms of narrow conceptions of supervision, then becomes dispersed to include the whole environment in which doctoral research is undertaken.*

The emergence of the professional doctorate (including the EdD) in Britain can be seen as one result of these shifts in conceptions of study at doctoral level. It is "normally delivered on a cohort basis" and "tends to be more 'applied' in nature" (Taylor 2008, p.68) - with the one-to-one supervision of the master-apprentice PhD partially replaced by a more active and overt doctoral pedagogy (Lee & Boud 2009, p.20ff), as well as by "sharing of practical experiences" among "groups of students" (Taylor 2008, p.68). However, taken together the emergence of new kinds of PhD and the rise of graduate schools in Britain mean that for doctoral students of all kinds being part of a cohort "is becoming increasingly likely" (QAA 2011, p.21).

These important shifts in doctoral education raise questions about assessment. Denicolo & Park (2010, p.2) suggest that "the challenge is to have a form of assessment that makes it possible to evaluate whether the candidate has an adequate amount or level of doctorateness" rather than, as hitherto, to focus on the output (the thesis). However, Denicolo and Park appear to imply that it is possible for a candidate to produce a passable doctoral thesis while not himself or herself

displaying an optimal level of ‘doctorateness’ - a “rather elusive” quality (incorporating such things as independence of thinking and intellectual confidence). This foregrounds the question of whether doctoral assessment should attend to the thesis, the candidate or both.

### *1.1.2 Doctoral completion rates*

From the 1980s onwards, the higher education sector in England has been scrutinised and reported on by various agencies (such as HEFCE and QAA) drawing on a 'quality assurance' perspective or discourse. An aspect of this approach to the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education is its broad view of education (including doctoral education) in terms of inputs and outputs (Turner 2004, pp.161-162). There is a concern at government level that where public funds (also referred to as "tax-payers' money") are invested in higher education there should be a demonstrably good return on that investment. Bodies such as the QAA (Britain) and AUQA (Australia) are charged by government with the task of ensuring that this is so, while apparently operating independently of the state as 'agencies'. In attempting to do so, such agencies/bureaucracies place emphasis on particular 'indicators' which they regard as significant. For doctoral education (in Britain, Australia and elsewhere - see for instance Alcantara et al. (2008, p.162) for Mexico) one key indicator adopted is completion rates. As Green (2008, pp.39-40) notes regarding doctoral education in Britain:

*Value for money represents a significant driver for change in the UK as governments increasingly recognise the costs of training doctoral students....Often expressed in terms other than value for money or return on investment, such as high completion rates, the underlying issue is value for money.*

This emphasis on the state's concern with “value for money” is further driven home by the following extract from the White Paper “Realising Our Potential” (UK Department of Trade & Industry, 1993), quoted by Green & Powell (2005, p.159):

*A period spent in PhD training represents a substantial investment in public funds and it is important to ensure that it represents good value for money for the taxpayer, as well as the individual student.*

Although seen elsewhere, the emphasis on doctoral completion rates seems, in recent years, particularly striking in Australia and Britain. In Australia the state appears to be placing very considerable emphasis on both time to completion (in years and months) and completion rates (in



percentages) in doctoral education. As Neumann (2009, p.210) notes:

*Change has been triggered by altered federal government funding policy on higher education. Universities must adapt from a time of funding enrolled doctoral places to an era of competitive performance-based allocations calculated on actual doctoral completions. The challenge for universities and the country is that diversity not be sacrificed in the process as university management is tempted to adopt risk minimisation strategies under the pressures of more competitive funding and narrow outcomes-based performance measures.*

The situation in Britain is rather similar (Delamont et al. 2004, p.2):

*Research councils and the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), who are the source of centrally-funded research studentships in the UK, increasingly demand high completion rates (usually submission of the PhD within four years of commencement) as part of their processes of recognition.*

Green & Powell (2005, p.177) note that “in the UK, the Research Councils use submission rates as measures of success”, and that “despite reservations across the sector” the monitoring of institutional performance in research degree provision will rest heavily on statistics about completion rates, with “institutions measured against what is the median for completion across the sector” (op. cit., p.139). Those “not meeting a reasonable level of completions” can expect follow-up. For an example which suggests that these authors' statements are prescient, see Jump's (2010) summary of HEFCE criticism of Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Bedfordshire for apparently falling short of national benchmarks for doctoral completion rates.

This rather rigid stipulation of time to completion can be seen as militating against the need to inculcate employability skills in doctoral students (Tennant 2009, p.235). But perhaps a more important effect is that the scope of the doctoral (PhD) thesis may well have been affected:

*The days of the 'blockbuster thesis' are over and the focus is on 'do-able' projects within the government's specified timeframe of three years. In science fields the trend is also to 'downsize' projects..." (Neumann 2009, p.218)*

*Now timeliness has morphed from an ideal into a performed calculation...in the higher education sector. And as such it can have the effect of changing what doctoral students and their supervisors actually decide to do or not to do as higher degree research. The imperative to timeliness is inextricably caught up with the doctoral experience... (McWilliam 2009, p.190)*

It may be, then, that when states or their agencies require universities to aim at high rates of completion and a maximum time to completion in doctoral education, one effect of this is to reduce the ambitions of PhD candidates in designing or choosing a research project. What is 'do-able' in available time takes precedence over what the candidate might ideally wish to attempt. In some respects, therefore, (scope/size of thesis, perhaps the presence of taught modules) the PhD in some countries, universities and disciplines, appears to be moving closer to modular doctorates with shorter theses, such as the EdD.

Writing somewhat earlier, Cowen (1997, p.197) points to a certain standardization and perhaps levelling down in doctoral education, with quality assurance the main culprit. He argues (loc. cit.) that originality has been “routinized” – “it has become a more or less predictable product of the structural attributes of doctoral programmes... and the cumulative effect of ‘quality’ control mechanisms.” He goes on (loc. cit.): “The search for the demonstration of brilliance...merely moves elsewhere – to the post-doctoral or to the assistant professor phase of a career, as in the United States, and is judged by publication rather than PhD.” If one accepts this line of argument, it may be that the current emphasis on ‘originality’ in definitions of doctoral standard is misconceived. The PhD, and by extension all doctorates, have become, in this view, almost an entry level qualification. The implication would be that doctoral examiners should be looking for the *potential* in a candidate to emerge as a researcher (PhD) or reflective practitioner (EdD) capable of generating original and critical thought at a sophisticated and widely-informed level.

As Taylor (2008, p.84) reports, on the basis of a relatively small-scale survey of programmes (six professional doctorates in six different UK universities), the data on completion times and rates appear to be somewhat different:

*The numbers failing to complete are alarming...There is a curious paradox, with growing interest in such programmes compared with the traditional PhD, yet relatively small numbers seeing the programme through to completion.*

Therefore, while Park (2005, p.192ff.) asserts, perhaps correctly, that greater attention to doctoral completion rates has had direct effects on doctoral education, it seems that not all UK universities currently achieve high completion rates for professional doctorates.

### *1.1.3 The role of the supervisor*

When the 'classical' or 'traditional' PhD model still held sway in doctoral education, it was probably true to say that the role of the supervisor and the process of supervision were taken for granted, or regarded as unproblematic. Indeed, it was often suggested that if the supervisor had a PhD then s/he should be able to supervise successfully (Lee & Aitchison 2009). However, current thinking in doctoral education emphasises 'doctoral pedagogy', with consequent changes in understanding about the role of the supervisor. In addition, there have been calls (see, for instance, Brew & Peseta 2009) for the development of theories of supervision. In this section I shall briefly summarise the impact of these developments on doctoral education in general.

Writing eight years ago, Delamont et al. (2004, p.24) suggest that in the majority of British universities "there are no requirements that supervisors are trained", and they document this by reference to interviews with inexperienced supervisors taking on the task for the first time. One neophyte describes the responsibility of supervising three students as "deeply terrifying" (loc. cit.). However, as Green (2008, p.56ff) notes, the trend towards the establishment of graduate schools in UK universities may have begun to create an environment of change. Indeed, he declares that "the need to train supervisors has been recognised by policy makers and funders in the UK for over ten years." Furthermore, in more recent publications, Lee (2009, p.195) – probably writing mainly about Australia - claims that "most universities run education sessions on how to be a doctoral supervisor...", and Green (2008) regards the QAA codes of practice (QAA 2004) as providing a useful framework (or set of "precepts") through which consistently good quality supervision can be achieved.

It can be argued, however, that the practice of supervision should rest on more than a set of guidelines; that it should, in fact, be theorised. Brew & Peseta (op. cit., p.134) suggest that "supervision is seen in an institutional context as something that simply requires tweaking with a few tips and techniques." This commonsense view holds that it is straightforward to use experience as a supervisee as a basis for successful supervision, even if the only support offered is a flimsy leaflet or a web page listing well-established supervisory techniques. As Lee & Aitchison (2009, p.87) regretfully put it, "having written a thesis is most often the primary pedagogical qualification for supervising someone else's..." Therefore, Green (2005, p.151) is

surely right when he argues that "There is more to be said, more to *think*, regarding the subject of supervision." He goes on (op. cit., p.153):

*...supervision must be reconceptualised as comprising much more than the stereotypical image of an isolated dyadic relationship between a supervising academic, the 'supervisor', and a doctoral candidate, the 'supervisee'. Doctoral education is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production.....*

In stressing "identity formation" as a major goal or outcome of doctoral education for the candidate, Green is also recognizing the arena of doctoral supervision as one defined by social and power roles and relationships, by the respective agendas of the participants, and above all by the potential induction of a new member into the community of scholars ('the academy'). Green sees supervision (op. cit., p.161) as "an ensemble of knowledges, capacities, identities and dispositions" and "an interplay of specific social relations and social practices, mediated by language." It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that he concludes (op. cit., p.162) by seeing "doctoral education, and research supervision" as "heavily invested" and "fraught". Indeed, Green's (2005) views transport us far from the 'commonsense' view of supervision. Holding a PhD and receiving a few practical tips from experienced supervisors might not be sufficient to navigate safely through the turbulent waters to which he alludes.

For students undertaking an EdD, the issue of supervision is also important. Gregory (1995) – cited in Lee (2009, p.93) – thinks the relationship between an EdD student and his/her supervisor should be conducted between equals, since this is the kind of working relationship that EdD students are most familiar with. The 'supervisor' then becomes an adviser, who recognises the doctoral student's "professional or practical experience" (Lee 2009: loc. cit.). In that way supervision could conceivably entail 'overseeing' without any concomitant 'looking down'.

It is sometimes claimed that the student experience on the PhD and on professional doctorate programmes may differ in certain ways. Taylor (2008, p.68) suggests that there may be times when the "sense of group identity and camaraderie" associated with professional doctorates "normally delivered on a cohort basis" acts as an additional pillar of support. From his interview data Taylor recounts the case of a student having study problems on a professional doctorate who was dissuaded from withdrawing from the programme because of such support ("we are all in this together and we will get through it together", as Taylor (loc. cit.) reports one student saying).

Taylor contrasts this episode with the "isolation of the part-time research student who, whilst supported by a supervisor, tends to be working much more on his/her own." Graduate schools - in which supervisory teams rather than single supervisors are also increasingly common – may also provide PhD students with such forms of emotional and practical support. Since many EdD students study part-time and at a considerable geographical distance from both the university at which they are registered and their fellow students, perhaps this contributes to the “alarming” (low) completion rates mentioned by Taylor (2008, p.84)?

It should also be recognized that the complex activity of doctoral supervision may well be understood and operationalised in different ways by different individuals:

*If supervisors are asked if research degree supervision is an act of research or of teaching then, in our experience, responses will vary considerably. (Green & Powell 2005, p.153)*

To conclude this section, then, the trend towards supervisor training and towards a more active doctoral pedagogy may well, as Park (2005, p.192ff.) suggests, be having an effect on the student experience in doctoral education in Britain. However, it is perhaps noteworthy that while there are calls for supervisor training and theories of supervision, similar references to examiner training and theories of doctoral assessment are less easy to find. (For an exception, see Lee, 2009, p.195). However, overall Gilbert’s (2009, p.64) generalisation appears to hold good:

*The assumption presumably is that the standards are known by virtue of examiners' experience in research, in examination, or in having completed doctoral study themselves.*

This is an assumption which may or may not be a safe one in all cases, and which relates to the reliability of the assessment of EdD theses/candidates.

#### *1.1.4 The process and focus of doctoral assessment*

Generally speaking, although doctoral assessment has been widely discussed in scholarly literature, fundamental changes in forms of assessment are less evident. Of course, professional doctorates and the New Route PhD (see Glossary and References) involve submission of coursework. Yet doctoral candidates are still, on the whole, required to write a thesis and to ‘defend’ this in a viva voce examination, normally involving an external and internal examiner. We should note that both parts of this process of assessment are at least occasionally queried.

Noble (1994, pp.67-68) argues for the abolition of the viva, labelling it “an anachronism” and suggesting that there should be “more emphasis on the examination of the written thesis” and none on “oral and visual presentation skills”, while Green (2009, p.245) cites Rip (2004, p.165) and queries “the long-term viability or value of the thesis in doctoral research education” since it is “a type of product that will never be required in the later career” (Rip 2004). Perhaps this last point has particular resonance for the EdD, whose graduates rather rarely go into academia.

Stobart (2006, p.134) states that “at the heart of current understandings of validity are assumptions that an assessment effectively samples the construct that it claims to assess”. Kane (2012, p.5), writing of content validity, argues that:

*where a sample of some type of performance (e.g. playing the piano) is used to draw conclusions about level of skill in that kind of performance, a good case for the validity of the proposed interpretation can be made on rational grounds.*

How does viva performance relate to professional performance for EdD candidates? To what extent, in their professional lives, will they need to engage in oral academic debate over a sustained period of several hours (as EdD candidates may be required to do in the viva voce examination)? Could the content validity of the EdD viva be regarded as questionable? Or should it be argued that the EdD programme constitutes a different route to the same destination as the PhD, and that therefore all doctoral candidates must demonstrate the ability to express themselves with precision, and to defend their arguments cogently, in both speech and writing? We shall now briefly consider doctoral assessment and some pressures for its modification.

The doctoral viva voce examination has existed in Britain ever since the PhD was introduced and is also an integral part of EdD assessment. However, as Trafford & Leshem (2008, p.201) put it: “As researchers we all know that the doctoral viva is an under-researched phenomenon.” Doctoral examiners are experienced researchers but they rarely turn their analytic and critical gaze onto doctoral assessment itself, a fact which Trafford & Leshem (loc. cit.) attribute to the barriers of confidentiality and sensitivity around it. Park (2003), however, does grasp this particular nettle, reporting discussions in his own “research-intensive UK university” (op. cit., p.4) which were stimulated by the setting up of an internal working party charged with the task of stipulating “best practice in the research degree viva.” An appendix to Park’s paper (op. cit.,

pp.11-16) offers a “framework of best practice in the doctoral viva.” The paper arises from the work of a committee comprising various stakeholders in doctoral education (such as a Dean of Faculty, experienced external and internal examiners, a senior administrator responsible for postgraduate examinations, a post-doctoral researcher with recent experience of the viva, and a representative of the Student Union). The composition of the committee allowed the articulation of multiple perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the viva as a form of doctoral assessment. We shall now consider the issues and possible solutions raised.

Park (2003, p.1) begins with a sentence which, in my estimation, crisply sums up the need for valid and reliable forms of assessment at doctoral level:

*All institutions require and all students deserve academic procedures that are fair (on everyone), transparent (to everyone), and consistent (both in practice and outcome).*

Later in the same (opening) paragraph he goes on:

*With little consistency in process within and between institutions, equity of treatment and assurance of quality cannot be guaranteed.*

These extracts highlight immediately the fundamental need for individual universities, and the higher education sector generally, to exert maximum effort to put in place forms of doctoral assessment which are demonstrably consistent both in terms of examiner practices and examiner judgements, and to ensure that all participants in the assessment process (including the candidates, who are, in this particular social practice, undoubtedly the least powerful parties) are fully and explicitly informed about what will be expected of them and why.

Park argues (loc. cit.) therefore that “there is much to be gained from developing a framework of best practice” for the assessment of research degrees. This is one point on which I take issue, though only regarding terminology. The concept of “best practice” is, of course, widely used in scholarly work and bureaucratic documentation of relevance to quality assurance in higher education (see, for instance, AUQA’s Good Practice Database). However, I consider the term “best practice” to be misleading: it implies that no other practices (existing and perhaps also future) can conceivably be more efficacious. Surely what Park is offering here is “better” or “improved” practice, and his readers are to judge whether what he proposes is “better” than the

practice it is intended to replace.

Nevertheless, Park's use of the language of educational quality assurance here ("best practice", "assurance of quality") does foreground a very important point. In evaluating the appropriateness of doctoral assessment practices and procedures it might be prudent to draw on both the concepts and terminology of assessment, and of quality assurance. These two domains overlap, since if we ask whether a particular form of assessment is reliable (testing theory), we are also asking whether it is consistent (quality assurance).

Park argues (*op. cit.*, p.2) that "four criteria are normally used to judge academic quality assurance of procedures – are they appropriate, fair, transparent and applied consistently?" He then goes on to suggest that "some or all of the last three criteria can usually not be guaranteed in the context of the doctoral viva" because firstly there is a "lack of clearly defined rules of engagement" and secondly because practice in the viva normally reflects "the experiences and assumptions of the examiners involved." Does it follow, then, that what happens in the viva is somewhat unpredictable and cannot, therefore, be "transparent to the student" (Park 2003, p.2)?

Unlike Noble (1994), Park does not appear to consider abolition of the viva. Instead, he sees it as "much more than a symbol or a ritual" and argues that it is "a real hurdle that the student must negotiate" (*loc. cit.*). He also recognises the candidate's relatively powerless position in the viva, noting that the hurdle must be cleared "on other people's (the examiners') terms." This is an important point which should not be overlooked.

In the EdD viva, it is the examiners who largely establish the "terms" of what is a very particular social encounter, both through their individual and joint assumptions of what a viva is, or should be, and through their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The candidate's role is somewhat proscribed: s/he is generally expected (by the examiners) to respond rather than to initiate; and may find it politic to placate rather than to challenge (though, as Bassnett (2002) points out, there are numerous "pleasant and humane examiners" alongside those who – allegedly – are "prejudiced", "rude", or have "not read the thesis"). As Park suggests (*op. cit.*, p.2) "the stakes are high, particularly for the student", yet his/her experience of a doctoral viva "can be, and often



is, a very unsatisfactory one.” This is another aspect of the inequality of the viva: the examiners may occasionally find a particular viva “unsatisfactory” (indeed, see Grabbe 2003, pp.129ff. for examples of this) - but for them rather less is at stake.

Park identifies four main problem areas in doctoral vivas (op. cit., p.3). These are:

- Lack of transparency
- The socially constructed nature of the process
- The multiple roles expected of the viva
- Variability within and between institutions

We shall examine each of these factors in turn.

Many recent publications offer advice to doctoral students on how to approach the viva (for example, Lee 2009; Burgess et al. 2006; Phillips & Pugh 1994; Trafford & Leshem 2008; Wellington et al. 2005), and no doubt most UK universities offer support to students approaching the viva stage (mock vivas, supervisor advice), so the candidate does not usually begin his/her viva in ignorance of what might take place. Nevertheless, despite support and what is intended as preparation, the viva can still be a negative and unpredictable experience:

*A viva that you would have had with two other people would have been completely and utterly different. So I'm not sure that it is possible to prepare because it's down to whoever you are fortunate or unfortunate enough to have as your internal and external examiners. (Student 'Leila' quoted in Tinkler & Jackson 2002, p.94)*

*....two friends of mine had horrendous, absolutely horrendous experiences where they've just been sort of unable to speak for hours and one of them for days properly because they had such an upsetting time, aggressive, nasty, demoralising external examiners who just seemed to think their job was to make the person at the other side of the table feel like they'd done a \*\*\*\* piece of work. (Social Science student quoted in Tinkler & Jackson 2002, pp.94-95 - asterisks in original).*

We should be cautious about accepting such accounts at face value, since there is no triangulation, and moreover students perhaps have reasons for exaggerating the height of the “hurdle” (Park 2003) they are required to clear. Such reports contrast with others suggesting remarkably magnanimous treatment at the hands of examiners:

*One of my friends in History passed his about a month / two months ago and it was fine, basically they were lovely. Another friend of mine in Anthropology walks in and they said - oh, it's great, don't worry, let's talk about how to turn this into a book and it was fine... (Social Science student quoted in Tinkler & Jackson 2002, p.94).*

*...I walked in and they gave me a bottle of champagne and said “Relax you've passed”...*

*(Arts student quoted in Tinkler & Jackson 2002, p. 94).*

Cases in which the candidate learns at the outset of the viva that s/he has passed rather undercut the notion that "the viva is a real hurdle that the student must negotiate" (Park 2003, p.1). Indeed, given that this does happen one wonders whether examiners should have the right to waive the viva in certain clearly defined circumstances. This is an issue pursued through questionnaire item 14.

Park (2003) also identifies the socially-constructed nature of the viva as potentially problematic. He cites Boulter & Denicolo (2002)<sup>1</sup> when stating that multiple agendas are at work in the doctoral viva, yet in a context where the rules are both implicit and ill-defined. He goes on to suggest (citing Tinkler & Jackson 2002) that examiners behave differently in line with their understanding of what sort of "academic exchanges" the candidate should be able to cope with (op. cit., p.3). Noble (1994, p.67), for instance, asserts that "For those candidates who do not possess a strong, confident voice and personality, plus the ability to parry verbal slings in a most sensitive way the experience can be disastrous." In this context, we may ask, for example, how examiners alter their verbal and non-verbal behaviour – and recalibrate their judgements - when encountering, say, a fifty year-old male American college principal (confident, articulate, extrovert), *versus* a much younger Japanese female candidate (little work experience, shy, uncomfortable with challenging perceived 'authority figures'). Tinkler & Jackson (2002, p.89) briefly consider such factors. To what extent are examiners guided in these areas? Perhaps – as Park indicates indirectly – individual examiners take into account such matters as personality factors and whether or not the candidate is using his/her mother tongue in idiosyncratic ways. Yet it seems plausible to assume that such issues can affect both the nature of the viva 'conversation', and the viva's outcomes. As Noble (1994, p.67) puts it, the viva "can be a good forum for those with public speaking skills who are confident and who can think on their feet."

In my view, Noble's comment relates to cognitive style: some individuals are adept at offering a rapid response to an issue which they may never previously have considered, while others – whose intelligence is of a different kind – may operate more effectively when given a few minutes, hours or even days to mull over a problem before offering a considered reply. The

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<sup>1</sup> See also Denicolo (2003).

slower thinker is not necessarily inferior, or less doctoral in nature, and may indeed offer deeper solutions. The admittedly fictional Sherlock Holmes probably does not fall in our estimation when (in “The Red-Headed League”) he encounters what he terms “a three-pipe problem” and asks to be allowed silence in which to cogitate. Noble (loc. cit.) makes an interesting point when he argues that traits or abilities such as “public speaking skills”, confidence and the ability to think on one’s feet, should not be taken as especially relevant to the issue of whether someone should be awarded a doctorate. Tinkler & Jackson (2002, p.89) warn against conflating the ability to “think on the hoof” with “intellectual competence”, and they note that “some people require time and certain conditions to tease through problems.” They also rightly note (loc. cit.) that taking a viva voce in a second language is an additional challenge. For Noble meanwhile, the crux of doctoral assessment is “the examination of the written thesis” (op. cit., p.68), and the viva voce examination is outdated and should be abolished. His position is that the locus of doctoral assessment should be the thesis and not the candidate.

Park’s third issue is whether the primary role of the viva is “academic community-building or gate-keeping”. Jackson & Tinkler (2001, p.360) found no particular consensus in the views of academics asked about the main roles of the doctoral viva, with no single role being mentioned by more than 40% of their sample. Roles mentioned include the following:

- Ensuring authenticity
- Checking the candidate’s understanding
- Checking the candidate’s ability to produce and present at an acceptable standard
- Checking that the candidate can defend her/his thesis
- Monitoring of academic standards
- Providing advice and guidance
- Acting as a rite of passage

Some of these roles seem to relate most closely to Park’s “community-building” (for example, providing advice and guidance), whilst others are more easily seen as relating to “gate-keeping” (such as monitoring of academic standards). In my view at least three of these items are either redundant for the EdD, or questionable for doctorates as a whole. I present my reasoning below.

In EdD programmes at English universities, candidates have already submitted a number of

lengthy written assignments before they reach the thesis stage. For instance, at the University of Bath, four assignments each of 8000 words have been written and been passed by appropriately selected first and second markers before the thesis is attempted. Therefore the EdD programme team at the University of Bath is already very familiar with a candidate's ability as a writer of formal academic English, long before s/he submits the thesis. On submission, the thesis can easily be checked against the 32,000 words of work (four assignments) previously completed. In most cases, therefore, comparison should allow a conclusion about whether or not the latter is the student's own work. Hence, item one on the Tinkler & Jackson (2001) list (above) falls, although a viva might be an effective means of checking in cases of doubt.

The third bullet point here ("ability to produce and present at an acceptable standard") provokes the question 'acceptable standard for what?' Numerous contemporary sources attest to the fact that, currently, relatively few doctoral candidates go on to become academics. As we have seen above Park (2007, p.17) puts the proportion at approximately one third, while Green 2008, p.43) gives a general indication of what happens to the remainder when he states that "significant numbers of successful doctoral candidates follow careers in industry and the professions in a range of capacities." Are doctoral examiners either suitably qualified or adequately guided to reach consistent and reliable decisions on whether a candidate's "ability to produce and present" are "at an acceptable standard" to meet the needs of industry and the professions? Or, if indeed they take such things into account when considering a candidate's performance in the doctoral viva, do they in fact make judgements on the basis of what they know best, which is, of course, what is needed for a career in academia? This question is also important in a more general sense when considering the viva voce examination for the EdD degree. Many of those who present themselves for the viva at Bath, for instance, will be teachers or principals from various international schools. While it could be argued that budding academics should face a test of their ability to debate complex conceptual and methodological issues with established academics in order to demonstrate their full (spoken as well as written) capacity to join 'the academy', it is not so evident that (for example) teachers, principals, Ministry of Education officials or quality assurance bureaucrats completing an EdD will frequently need such skills in their subsequent working lives. The issue here is one of 'fitness for purpose' - one of the widely used short-hand definitions of 'quality' in a higher education context (Harvey 2004). One could ask whether,

given the career paths associated with those who submit EdD theses for examination, the viva examination is 'fit for purpose'.

Finally, certain academics consulted by Jackson & Tinkler (2001) see the viva voce examination as a rite of passage. This phrase ('rite of passage') appears quite often in discussion of the doctoral viva examination – see, for instance, Sinclair's (2007) title. Without wishing to pursue this argument too far, the term 'rite of passage' (or '*rite de passage*' - see Delamont et al. 2000, p.79; p.93; pp.97-98) is frequently used in anthropology to refer to initiation ceremonies or practices which are unpleasant for those that undergo them (such as the circumcision of boys in various West African cultures as a rite of passage into manhood, or the painful or degrading practices forced on new recruits in a military setting (including 'dedovshchina' - дедовщина - in the Russian army). This is not, of course, to suggest that the doctoral candidate is treated with the brutality of 'hazing' taking place in the armed services. However, it is conceivable that if some examiners regard the viva voce examination as a rite of passage they may approach it in a more confrontational spirit than those who (Park 2003, p.3) see it more in terms of "academic community-building." The doctoral viva has remained in place in English universities, relatively unchanged, for nine decades. Some academics (Park 2003, p.6) suggest that the viva voce examination "ain't broke", so there is no need to "fix it". One wonders if there is any similarity between academics who see the doctoral viva as a necessary rite of passage (perhaps, ultimately, because they themselves were obliged to experience it), and those members of the general public who advocate corporal punishment for misbehaving children, arguing that it "never did me any harm" (Council of Europe, 2004, p.3).

The fourth and final problem raised by Park (2003) about doctoral vivas is "variability of practice within and between institutions" (op. cit., p.4). Here Park cites comments by various scholars, suggesting that the viva - "at least in the humanities" - can be "something of a dog's breakfast" (Bassnett 2003, p.16). Park (2003, p.4) notes that in their study of twenty universities Tinkler & Jackson (2000) found that the viva was, in fact, conceptualised and operationalised in diverse ways." The same authors (Tinkler & Jackson) in a different paper (2002, p.88) quote Cryer (2000, p.240) as stating that "There is no such thing as a typical oral examination." Park also notes (loc. cit.) that Morley et al. (2003) report "considerable variation, and some

mystification, in how doctoral assessment is conducted and experienced." The relatively recent provision of QAA guidelines (QAA 2001) may have led to greater consistency in doctoral assessment within and across institutions, but nevertheless the impact of the human factor in the doctoral viva voce examination should not be underestimated. As Delamont et al. (2004) make clear, the choice of external examiner can have a decided effect on the viva's atmosphere and conduct. The authors (op. cit., p.143) highlight some issues facing the supervisor or department charged with selecting an external examiner: should it be "*the* specialist expert on the topic" (their emphasis), or should someone else be chosen if the "expert" is "horrendously severe on students, or obsessively picky"? Although students may ask for an external who is "soft" or "easy" (op. cit., p.144), it is, of course, essential to find someone who is "a fair, judicious, rational examiner" (op. cit., p.143). It seems unlikely that there is any fail-safe way of doing this, yet the candidate's experience of the doctoral viva is likely to be strongly determined by the external examiner's approach and manner.

As "an experienced examiner" notes (Trafford & Leshem 2008, pp.208-209) "emotional outbursts" and "anger and frustration" do occur on the part of candidates during the viva, and sometimes this may be "justified", since perhaps the examiner has not "read the thesis", or is "unwilling to accept any answer", or wants to know why the candidate has "not cited her work." Nevertheless - and more positively - the same source declares that most examiners behave professionally, showing respect for the candidate's work, and displaying open-mindedness.

Purely as a point of comparison and potential illumination we may note the case of the unprincipled Indian examiner cited in Jayaram (2008). Jayaram points out severe shortcomings in doctoral standards and assessment in India, and among these is the practice by supervisors ("guides" in India) of placing "friends on the panel of examiners, as *quid pro quo*, so that the theses supervised by them pass muster" (op. cit., p.240). Of course, this sort of practice, in which, according to Jayaram, networks of Indian academics operate on a 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours' basis, is wholly without integrity and may not exist in Britain. However, we should perhaps recognise that if a student writes a thesis based on Bloggsian theory, and Professor Bloggs herself or one of her disciples is appointed as external examiner, the difference from our Indian case may be very considerable yet not absolute.

We should also remember that almost all the scholarly literature quoted and discussed above is either entirely concerned with the PhD, or treats 'the doctorate' in a generic way, with no, or only very sparing, references to the EdD or to professional doctorates.

#### *1.1.5 Benchmarking of the doctorate*

Park's (2005) fifth and last driver of change in the doctorate in the UK is the increasing attention being paid to benchmarking. As Shaw & Green (2002, p.116) note, the concept of benchmarking is a relatively new one in the field of higher education (but see, for example, Pring 1992, Jackson 1998a and Jackson 1998b for earlier work on standards and benchmarking). A widely-known example of a benchmarking exercise in UK higher education is that in which, over the last ten years or so, "benchmark statements" have been written by groups of specialist university academics for over forty honours degree areas (QAA 2002-2010). These are intended to serve as a guide to universities designing or evaluating and revising honours degree programmes. The intention is to ensure that all UK universities offering a particular degree (say in Linguistics or Chemistry) are aware of what is normally covered in such a degree, and of the particular learning outcomes which the subject specialist team have identified. It is argued that such 'benchmark statements' do not seek to impose absolute uniformity, but instead to act as a guide to generally accepted practice against which universities may tailor their own provision.

The QAA (2008, pp.23-24) also offers descriptors (see Appendix A) for doctoral (D) level study, arguing that these act as "a reference point" for programmes offered at this level. In other words, they are intended to serve as a benchmark against which universities can compare their own doctoral degree programmes. However, it seems that some of the terms used are open to a variety of interpretations. For example:

- What exactly constitutes “new knowledge”?
- How should we understand the term “original research”? For example a work of art can be said to be ‘original’ if I produced it myself and did not copy it directly from a previously existing work. Nevertheless, such a work of art (or piece of research) may be wholly, partly or slightly derivative of, or ‘of the school of’, an earlier work (or piece of research). Green & Powell (2005, p.58) argue that “it is hard to envisage degrees of originality; clearly work is original or it is not.” Is that a widely accepted view in English

universities?

- Work at doctoral level should “merit publication”. Publication where? All academic journals are not usually held to be of equal standard.
- How will doctoral assessment address the issue of whether a candidate can “communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to...non-specialist audiences”?
- Concerning the phrase “contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches”, how “substantially”?

Of course, many other questions and issues arise. For example, item ii (Appendix A) makes a distinction between “knowledge...at the forefront of an academic discipline” and knowledge at the forefront of an “area of professional practice.” Presumably this form of words has been chosen to cover the needs of both the PhD and the professional doctorate. However, Green & Powell (2005, p.236) argue that “the concept of professionally oriented research, as opposed to academic research, gives rise to a false dichotomy.”

The QAA guidelines on D level can certainly be seen as a useful tool for those involved in the design, delivery and assessment of EdD programmes in English (or British) universities. Indeed the same could be said of contemporary scholarly literature on the doctorate and doctorateness as a whole. Doctoral education in Britain (hence England) is in a state of flux, with the traditional PhD subject to pressures for change from outside the academy, and the appearance alongside it of ‘professional doctorates’ (including the EdD) posing complex questions about knowledge, skills and assessment at doctoral level.

This wider context of change and pressure for change provides one of the motivations for the present study. In Britain today the ‘dumbing down’ allegation is frequently heard – whether in relation to national school examinations or BBC programming (Davidson 2011). It seems to be almost a universal reaction – particularly, perhaps, among older people – to claim that when things are not as they were, they have been debased or robbed of their original value. Are similar sentiments to be found among academics teaching on the relatively new EdD programmes in universities in England? Do some older academics feel nostalgia for the time when the PhD/DPhil reigned almost alone? Do all agree with the QAA that one set of D Level descriptors can and should be applicable to all doctoral programmes? Or are some uneasy about recent



changes to doctoral education, perhaps agreeing with the Australian colleague (Introduction) who regarded the EdD as not really on a par with the PhD? Poultney (2010, p.82) gives her personal view as an EdD programme leader that “the flexibility and impact on professions offered by the EdD is not in any way ‘inferior’ to the PhD programme”, but she also notes “resistance to professional doctorates” and ends by declaring that “the struggle continues”.

This thesis aims to cast light on some criticisms of the relatively new EdD programmes in English universities which, for whatever reason, are not often openly discussed. However, before doing so, it is necessary to proceed in a more scholarly way by specifying the exact research questions to be investigated and by laying out my methodological assumptions and approach.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Research Design**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

I shall begin by setting out three research questions, and then explaining briefly how these have arisen and why they are of importance. Taken together, the three research questions probe the beliefs and assumptions of academics teaching on EdD programmes in universities in England. It will be argued that each question focuses on an issue which bears crucially on the way EdD students are taught and assessed, or on perceptions of the standing of the EdD as an award among potential students and the wider academic community (such as academics in other fields, university managers, journalists and broadcasters specialising in education-related matters).

Although the scope of the present research is necessarily limited, it is carried out with the hope that its completion and dissemination will, if only in a minor way, catalyse discussion among EdD academics about some of the fundamental issues relating to ‘doctorateness’ and the EdD in English universities offering such programmes. Ideally, researchers from within the population of EdD academics (properly funded and thus able to plan and implement research projects on a larger scale) will then pursue similar issues with a greater hope of publication and impact.

In section 2.2 I introduce the three research questions, provide brief context for each, and indicate provenance.

In section 2.3 I summarise some literature on research methodology and outline personal beliefs about research design, data collection and data interpretation of relevance to the present thesis.

#### **2.2 Research Questions**

The three research questions are listed below. Each is followed by a very brief explanation of its importance.

*RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?*

Burgess & Wellington (2010, p.161) note that the EdD “developed through the initiatives of universities rather than a professional body or research council” and go on to say that “the structure and length of EdD programmes may vary considerably”. If we accept that such variance exists between the EdD programmes offered at particular universities, we might ask to what extent there is a common understanding of what the aims of EdD programmes are, or should be. Lee Brien (2009), writing in the context of Australian higher education, argues that new developments in doctoral education (including new types of doctorate) can “promote a sense of working on unstable ground for both candidates and supervisors.”

It is also important to investigate whether academics teaching on EdD programmes generally regard the EdD and the PhD in Education as different routes to the same endpoint (Taylor, 2008, p.71). Subsumed under research question one are also other issues, such as whether these academics see the EdD thesis purely as a site for applied research, and the extent to which they think that EdD students must address themselves to professional issues (that is, issues of direct relevance to his/her concerns in the professional setting). Also perhaps fruitful for further research might be perceptions among EdD academics of why ‘non-academics’ (such as those teaching or managing in UK schools or international schools) choose to enrol on an EdD programme (see also Wellington & Sikes 2006). Unless such perceptions are in line with students’ actual motivations it is difficult to see how the learning experience in EdD programmes can be properly attuned to students’ needs and wants.

Finally, there is the sensitive issue of whether the PhD should be regarded as the ‘gold standard’ (Sheely 1997, Taylor 2008) and other doctoral awards as derivative and, by comparison, somewhat debased. This is important in that the view (conscious or unconscious) taken here by individual EdD academics may influence their EdD teaching; marking of assignments; and expectations of EdD theses, EdD viva conduct, and candidate performance. It may also be an underlying source of variation in thesis supervision.

*RQ2: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination?*

This research question arises from persistent doubts expressed in scholarly literature on doctoral education about the value or reliability of the viva voce examination – where, by ‘reliability’, I mean the extent to which the viva produces pass-fail decisions which accurately and consistently reflect the capabilities of the respective candidates (Black & Wiliam (2006), pp.119-120) – and from sources which, while not questioning the utility of the viva, provide differing rationales for its continuing existence and operation. For instance, as we have seen, Noble (1994, pp.67-68) argues for the viva’s abolition in doctoral education as a whole, while Park (2003, p.1) casts doubt on its consistency across institutions and fairness to candidates. Park (op. cit.) also raises the question of whether or to what extent the viva's main role is “academic community-building or gate-keeping”. He cites work by Jackson & Tinkler (2001, p.360) in which no consensus was found in the views of academics asked about the main roles of the doctoral viva, with no single role being mentioned by more than 40% of their sample. Scholars such as Delamont et al. (2000) and Sinclair (2007) see the viva as a 'rite of passage' (with whatever connotations that phrase may have). But do all EdD academics see this as appropriate?

*RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of ‘originality’ or ‘original contribution’ in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?*

One issue here is whether EdD academics see 'originality' (a key component of doctorateness according to some (Trafford & Leshem 2009; Pearce 2005) as needing to be similar in kind and amount in an EdD thesis and a PhD thesis. For instance, Pearce (2005, p.25), cited by Trafford & Leshem (2009, p.308), regards originality as the “all-important criterion for doctoral-level research” and a QAA survey (n.d.) states that “a significant number of institutions” provide their own definitions of ‘originality’ as used in doctoral degrees. Differing views on such matters could contribute to inconsistency among judgements made by External Examiners, no matter how much detailed guidance is given by universities holding viva voce examinations. Some personal beliefs may be deep-seated and have the potential to over-ride and subvert written

guidelines. As Harlen (2006, p.117) notes: “All assessment involves judgement and will therefore be subject to some error or bias.”

A table summarising the preceding discussion is given below for ease of reference. An expanded version, also including questionnaire items and interview questions which relate to each research question is provided at Appendix I.

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Provenance</b>	<b>Potential Importance</b>
RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?	Taylor (2008, p.71); Sheely (1997); Burgess & Wellington (2010, p.161).	Individual academics’ perspectives on this may affect their judgements when designing or delivering EdD courses, examining theses, and marking assignments.
RQ2: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination?	Park (2003, p.1); Jackson & Tinkler (2001, p.360); Delamont et al. (2000).	Individual academics’ perspectives on this may affect their conduct and judgements as EdD viva voce examiners. To the extent that there are differences between individuals, this may have an effect on the reliability of the viva as a means of assessment.
RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of ‘originality’ or ‘original contribution’ in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?	Quality Assurance Agency (2008, p.23); Trafford & Leshem (2009, p.309); Pearce (2005, p.25)	Individual academics’ perspectives on this may affect their judgements in various ways, and particularly in assessment of EdD coursework and theses.

**Table 1: Provenance and Implications of the Three Research Questions**

## **2.3 Research Methodology**

According to Mercer (2005, p.1) methods represent “a methodology in action”. I shall adopt this

shorthand definition, using ‘methodology’, by contrast, to mean philosophy of method. Here I summarise insights on research methodology which have informed the design and conduct of the present research.

If we accept prevailing views that 21st century higher education both operates in, and contributes to, a state of “supercomplexity” (Barnett, 2000), then it is possible that only a very few causal relationships in the operation of universities (themselves capable of characterisation as supercomplex entities) will be capable of statement in the form if A then B. Given the multi-faceted and intricately inter-related nature of higher education and higher education institutions in the context of globalisation and late modernity, it is generally more plausible to envisage relations such that (in a particular area of university activity) A, B, C, D and E all, to varying degrees and in different circumstances, play a role in tending to cause F, although G, H, I and J may be countervailing factors. This is also likely to apply to the processes and procedures through which decisions are made to award, or withhold the award of, doctoral degrees including the EdD. The decision-making process through which it is established that an EdD candidate (and/or his/her thesis) has or has not displayed doctoral qualities is self-evidently complex. Simple linear arguments (A causes B; if C then D and E) cannot always capture the essence of what has been observed, as Peirce (cited by Menand 1997, pp.5-6) seems to imply:

*Reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibers may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected.*

In terms of the present thesis, I start from the premise that constructs such as ‘doctoral level’ and ‘doctorateness’; the beliefs of EdD academics about how EdD candidates should demonstrate these; and the decision-making process through which an EdD is awarded or not awarded; are all highly complex (in other words, they each consist of numerous interconnected and interacting sub-components or sub-strands)<sup>2</sup>. They will, in my view all be understood and articulated uniquely by each EdD academic. Similarly, each EdD academic will have his/her own beliefs about the actual or desirable nature of the EdD, and each EdD examination process (viva voce

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<sup>2</sup> Just how complex ‘doctorateness’ is in the minds of some academics is perhaps demonstrated by the following intricate definition, offered by an academic responding to a recent QAA survey (n.d.). Writing of a particular professional doctorate, s/he states that the degree “is characterized by advanced learning based on professional capability and in-depth research and development leading to substantial projects which achieve major organizational change and/or excellence in professional practice.”

examination and private examiner deliberations) will be unique too – emerging out of the interplay of factors (different in each case) such as theses, candidates, examiners, subject matters, and oral interactions. Given this understanding of the area of investigation, and the emphasis on ‘perspectives’ and ‘constructs’, I quickly decided that, in general, qualitative methods should be employed. It seems to me unlikely that a largely quantitative study could provide genuine insight when research into the ‘beliefs’ and ‘understandings’ (taken together, ‘perspectives’) of individual EdD academics is undertaken. Instead, questionnaires and interviews are the most promising vehicles for data collection, with these data then being critically examined by the researcher (myself), and all aspects of the research project being subject to continuous reflexive scrutiny, recorded through note-taking. However, it is clear that the interpretation of questionnaire and interview data consisting of numerous inter-related themes or issues, each of which appears and disappears, and is expressed at each appearance in different forms of words, is neither simple nor uncontentious. Indeed, whether research is carried out through methods which might broadly be termed ‘quantitative’, ‘mixed methods’ or ‘qualitative’, a degree of subjectivity (emanating from the researcher/researchers) will always affect to some degree the research’s design, conduct and stated outcomes. Factors in the researcher’s background (previous experiences, habitual attitudes) and his/her personal understanding of such matters as the nature of research and the characteristics of external reality will colour the research s/he carries out.

All researchers have a position, stated or unstated, on the nature of external reality and on what can and cannot be known about its characteristics, and all research is permeated with underlying assumptions: it simply cannot be otherwise. There is no such thing as "a view from nowhere" (Nagel 1986, cited in Sealey & Carter 2004). Hence, all researchers - and certainly those writing a doctoral thesis, which can be seen as bearing similarities to a musical 'five finger exercise' for the development and explicit demonstration of skills - must make their assumptions explicit from the beginning. Equally, it may be valuable for the researcher to engage consciously and as honestly as is possible in reflexivity, so that s/he can offer comments on how his/her background and beliefs may have influenced research design, research implementation, data analysis and conclusions – though for a deeply sceptical examination of reflexivity as a component of high quality research see Lynch (2000). Even where researchers offer reflexive commentaries they

will undoubtedly be influenced by personal characteristics and foibles. For instance, some researchers may (consciously or unconsciously) want to present themselves and their motivations and research in a positive light, while others may be unnecessarily self-critical and highlight shortcomings which, to their readers, seem illusory or insubstantial. Nevertheless, although it can be argued that they rest on “no special theory, method or subject position” (Lynch 2000, p.48), such researcher commentaries (see, for example, Greenbank 2003, p.798) serve to raise for the reader's inspection areas in which subjectivity may have had a significant effect on the research project at the stages of design, implementation, data analysis, and formulation of conclusions. However, even where a piece of research seems to have been strongly shaped by what might be termed subjective factors, it is mistaken in my view to use loaded terms such as ‘polluted’ or ‘distorted’. If the researcher makes a sincere and explicit effort to explain how issues in his/her background may have influenced his/her research project at all stages, the dangers of subjectivity have, at least in *post facto* terms, been mitigated.

Below I provide other key ideas, culled from literature on research methodology (particularly in the areas of the social sciences, education and applied linguistics), which I personally find well-grounded and helpful.

### 2.3.1 Pragmatism

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue for the value to research of the pragmatism of philosophers such as Peirce, while freely confessing that this, too, has its “shortcomings” (op. cit., p.17). In a helpful, wide-ranging table (op. cit., p.18) they identify general characteristics of pragmatism. I do not find everything in the table to be consistent with my own emerging research philosophy, but from it I have selected – and slightly truncated - the following:

- *the rejection of traditional dualisms such as subjectivism versus objectivism;*
- *the view that knowledge is both constructed and based on experience of the world;*
- *the position that theories should be judged on how well they currently work – with ‘workability’ judged on the criteria of predictability and applicability;*
- *the endorsement of eclecticism and pluralism (different, even conflicting, theories can be useful; observation, experience and experiments are all helpful ways of forming an understanding of the external world);*
- *the view that truth, meaning and knowledge are tentative and change over time.*



These statements contain aspects of my own understanding of the nature of educational research, its data and its purposes. As I see it, these statements may sustain many researchers whose inclination is towards either a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach – though perhaps the latter two groups may predominate.

### 2.3.2 Comparison

Bechhofer & Patterson (2000, vii) see both comparison and control as being “fundamental to research design” in the social sciences. The notion of ‘control’ is perhaps most relevant to research in the classic ‘hard science’ empirical tradition, in which the experimenter typically controls or manipulates one or more independent variables in order to investigate effects on one or more dependent variables.

These authors (op. cit., p.3) make what, in my view, is an important point when they argue that “comparison is a fundamental aspect of cognition”. They go on (op. cit., p.5) to suggest that:

*Sometimes people talk about description in a manner which suggests that one can describe absolutely, so that what is observed and described relates only to that which is being described; no comparison is involved. We would reject this view. The act of description requires us explicitly or implicitly to compare the object being described with something else, and it is this feature which makes the idea of ‘pure description’ meaningless.*

This conscious or unconscious reliance on comparison has clear implications for educational research. For instance, some educational research requires the researcher to enter classrooms and to make recordings (audio, video), or to take field notes, or to record ‘what happens’ through a system for coding various pre-defined types of teacher or learner behaviour. When analysing and interpreting what has been recorded (audio, video, field notes, or coding), the researcher is (I would argue) always likely to be influenced by his/her previous experience of classroom activity. That is to say, the researcher is not able to provide a ‘pure description’ or a ‘pure analysis’ of what happened; instead, his/her description or analysis is in part shaped through comparison with the totality of his/her earlier classroom experiences. As Eisner (1993, p.54) puts it, "knowledge is always constructed relative to a framework, to a form of representation, to a cultural code, and to a personal biography."

### *2.3.3 The influence of personal biography*

The issue of how personal biography can affect the design, conduct and interpretation of research is relevant to the present thesis, and explains why I began (see Introduction) by describing how I came to choose my thesis topic. As Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p.6) note, the experienced qualitative researcher knows that “research is an interactive process shaped by his/her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity.” In fact, in my view, this is true for all forms of education research. Whatever the research context or methodology, the processes and outcomes of research design, data analysis and formulation of conclusions, will be influenced by explicit or implicit comparison with research settings and problems previously encountered by the researcher.

Greenbank (2003) provides an excellent personal account of how a researcher schooled in quantitative research methods came to see that qualitative research methods and reflexivity have much to contribute to educational research. Borg (2010, p.11) meanwhile offers a strong and succinct argument for reflexivity, emphasising the need for researchers to “monitor their own biases and reflect on how these might influence their work”. This view of reflexivity perhaps predominates in the social sciences. As Hardy et al. (2001, p.532) note, “approaches to reflexivity vary”, but most focus on “conducting research in such a way that turns back upon, and takes account of, itself.” The same authors (op. cit., p.533) also offer a slightly more precise definition: “Reflexivity involves reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes.” I would add that the researcher should reflect on how personal factors (previous experiences, personal views and prejudices) may have influenced the research project's design, conduct and outcomes. Although introspection cannot, by its nature, reliably capture all personal/researcher factors which affected a project, it constitutes perhaps the only means of revealing such information to the reader when research is reported.

In discussion of the notions of objectivity and objective knowledge, Sealey & Carter (2004, p.15) reject – as do I – the notion “that there is one (true) point of view from which reality can be apprehended.” Thus, in order not to lay themselves open to accusations of “partisanship” (Tooley & Darby 1998), researchers should recognise that the theoretical standpoints they adopt, the

methodology and methods they employ, and the ways in which they interpret data are influenced in widespread and complex ways by factors in their respective personal backgrounds. In my own case, it is perhaps important that I should acknowledge:

- *My background in educational quality assurance, (language) testing, and applied linguistics*
- *My position as an EdD student and doctoral candidate*
- *The fact that I began a PhD in the 1990s but failed to carry it to completion*
- *My lack of first-hand experience, at doctoral level, of the assessment of either written theses or oral (viva voce) performance*
- *The fact that I have never worked in a UK university Department/School of Education*
- *My resistance and occasional hostility towards institutions and practices which I take to rest largely on ‘tradition’ rather than fairness (such as the monarchy, or the House of Lords)*

It seems clear when considering such factors (and of course I may be unaware of still others) that my own view of doctoral education and its associated practices is not a “view from nowhere”. Instead it is the view of a unique individual, whose decisions and interpretations during the course of the research are influenced by factors including those above.

Of equal importance (especially, perhaps, to research which investigates the perspectives of a ‘third party’ group – EdD academics) is that, as Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p.6) note, research is “an interactive process” shaped not only by the researcher's background, but also “by those of the people in the setting.” My own thinking about the EdD has probably shifted as I contemplated insights from ‘insiders’ (EdD academics) via the questionnaire data (especially some of the written comments) and the GT interview transcripts.

#### *2.3.4 Ontological viewpoint*

The reader may have ascertained that my ontological view is that a single external reality exists, but is interpreted in as many different ways as there are individuals to observe it. Each individual EdD academic’s or EdD examiner’s perspective on the EdD will differ. This is because factors such as prior experiences, cognitive styles and sensory apparatuses will necessarily cause each person to understand and express things differently. The notion of ‘objectivity’ in research, too, becomes dubious – at least in the naïve way it is sometimes understood – since there is no possible way of excluding one’s personal feelings, inclinations, experiences and so on from

research design and data interpretation. Objectivity in research, in my view, exists only in the sense identified by Phillips (1993). In his view an argument may be termed "subjective" when it "has not been sufficiently opened to the light of reason and criticism" (Phillips, 1993, p.71) whereas "a view that is objective is one that has been opened up to scrutiny, to vigorous examination, to challenge" (op. cit., p.66).

This view of subjectivity/objectivity (which I find persuasive) may also have a bearing on aspects of the present thesis. Firstly, it seems to provide one possible philosophical basis for the compulsory viva voce examination – if a doctoral candidate's thesis has not been "opened to the light of reason and criticism" (by the examiners) then it might be termed "subjective". Secondly, if the final judgement of doctoral examiners is not "opened to the light of reason and criticism" (as it currently seems not to be), then it too could be labelled "subjective".

### *2.3.5 Triangulation*

Data such as written questionnaire responses and interview transcriptions are interpreted by the researcher. It is therefore essential to take into account Johnson & Onwuegbuzie's (2004, p.16) cautionary comment that "research is more than simply one researcher's highly idiosyncratic opinions written into a report." Although factors in the researcher's own background may colour how s/he sets up a research project, carries it through and identifies and characterises its findings, however, this generalisation does not justify researcher observations which are essentially flights of fancy. The so-called Tooley Report (Tooley & Darby 1998) was, at the time of its publication, received less than warmly by the community of educational researchers, but one valid point it makes (op. cit.: 14) is that triangulation (or cross-validation) is important, wherever possible. If observation from two or more different perspectives (theoretical or, in the case of classroom-based research, physical) produces similar results, then those results are more credible. In cases where this is possible (seven only), I have compared statements made by subject EdD academics in interviews with ratings/comments they previously made (approximately one year earlier) in questionnaire data. Examples include the views expressed by questionnaire respondent 22 (GT interviewee Y) on originality in the earlier questionnaire and later GT interview; and by questionnaire respondent 2 (GT interviewee W) in the questionnaire and GT interview on the possible "phasing out" of the EdD. In the questionnaire data, one might also see comparison

between the choice of a point on the Likert scale and a written comment on the item as providing triangulation. For instance, when respondent 26 chooses ‘agree’ for item 38 and then says “38 is a good idea”, we have greater confidence that s/he has not chosen a scale-point in error. In general, evidence which seems consistent from two or more perspectives offers greater assurance of a well-founded conclusion.

### *2.3.6 Summary*

I shall now pull together the various strands of my research philosophy as described above. Firstly, strong commitment to the exclusive use of either quantitative or qualitative methods is misguided: it implies that a particular method is good regardless of what is investigated. Rather, I would say that research methods should be chosen on the basis of what the researcher is seeking to find out. Crudely, some phenomena seem to lend themselves to investigation through mainly quantitative methods (such as, perhaps, the relationships between social class or gender and results in public examinations) while others (such as those relating to the attitudes and beliefs of teachers) might more readily be investigated through mainly qualitative methods. However, the choice of research methods is also bound up with validity, described in the way it is presented by Maxwell (1992). Maxwell argues (op. cit., p.281) that many definitions of research validity are essentially positivist in nature, and suggests that a possible alternative is “a realist conception of validity that sees the validity of an account as inherent, not in the procedures used to produce and validate it, but in its relationship to those things that it is intended to be an account of.” This is the broad view of validity I take here.

A degree of pragmatism is also important in research design. For instance, inexperienced researchers should be realistic about how much data can or should be collected and analysed within a given timeframe. Secondly, one must be mindful of the influence of personal biography on the conduct of research, and the impossibility of describing data or phenomena in isolation, without consciously or unconsciously comparing with other (previously encountered) data or phenomena. All research is affected by factors like these which are sometimes described – often pejoratively – under the heading of ‘subjectivity’. A fundamental component of my ontological position is that a single external reality is perceived and described differently by each individual. Finally, I consider that all knowledge is provisional and that no research project can claim to

have revealed some final and absolute truth. Every research project is unique and all research is fallible or flawed. Reflexive accounts can reveal researcher assumptions and doubts to the reader, while triangulation has the potential to increase the degree of confidence in results.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Research Implementation

#### 3.1 Research Methods

I have indicated above (2.3) that I adopt here the generally accepted distinction between methodology and methods, under which methodology can be seen as ontological position plus epistemological position (or, more generally, as research philosophy), while methods represent methodology in action. In this chapter I briefly explain the rationale behind the decision to use essentially qualitative research methods. I then explain the 'narrowing strategy' I adopted, in which the questionnaire was employed in order to gather initial data on a range of matters relevant to the perspectives of EdD academics on the EdD, and the subsequent online interviews constituted a focusing in on three smaller constellations of issues. Following this, I discuss the drafting and piloting of the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are discussed in detail in Chapter Four, but here I also briefly state how the Venn diagram (Appendix H) arose out of scrutiny of the questionnaire data, and how it facilitated the setting up of the subsequent Google Talk (GT) interviews (see 4.2 below). Attention then switches to the GT online interviews themselves. I explain why this medium was chosen for follow-up interaction with selected questionnaire subjects. I also clarify the basis for choosing the seven GT subjects and describe the process of piloting and conducting the synchronous online interviews. Finally, I offer some reflexive discussion on the process of design of the research instruments, and on their use for data collection. GT data are discussed in 4.2.3 below.

##### *3.1.1 A rationale for the use of qualitative methods*

I shall begin with an elucidation of my reasons for using qualitative methods in the present research. Mercer (2005, p.137), writing in the context of the analysis of classroom talk, argues that:

*[A]ny method can only be judged by how well it serves the investigative interests of a researcher, how adequately it embodies the researcher's theoretical conception or model...and...beliefs about what constitutes valid empirical evidence.*

The EdD in universities in England (and its relation to the PhD in Education, and to other so-called 'professional doctorates') could conceivably be investigated in many different ways. For instance, it would be possible to gather data on the perspectives of EdD students, or to collect

accounts from EdD graduates - perhaps guided by Brown's (2009) edited collection of papers, in which "narratives", or "storytelling" (Brown, 2009, p.9) from recent PhD students are offered. Brown's introduction (Brown, 2009, p.9) explains that he has "no desire to engage with positivist ideas of validity, truth and generalisation." Personally I am uneasy with such a position, and whilst I here adopt essentially qualitative methods I should not like to endorse any flight from validity and generalisation. It is surely possible, through qualitative research methods, to produce results with sufficient credibility to justify testing in subsequent studies, perhaps via other approaches. Williams (2000), for instance, offers arguments, which are relevant here, in favour of the generalisability of results from research in the interpretive school of sociology. Furthermore, as Seale & Silverman (1997, p.380) note, "counts of events" (or what they term "quasi-statistics") can support generalisations made on the basis of qualitative data and can "address a common concern about qualitative data – that anecdotes supporting the writer's argument have been selected". This is one way in which qualitative research's validity can be enhanced. In my view, qualitative research methods are valid to the extent that results arise directly and plausibly from data – and I also agree with Borg (2010, p.10) that "technically competent data collection and analysis enhance the reliability and validity of a study."

Here, rather than examining student perceptions of the EdD, I have chosen to investigate the perspectives of EdD academics. I did this for three main reasons. Firstly, I felt that, as compared to EdD students, the perspectives of EdD academics rest on a deeper, more fully worked out, understanding of the history, philosophical underpinnings and operational complexities of EdD programmes in universities in England. Secondly, it seems clear that academics teaching on EdD programmes are (though they themselves might not wish to overplay this) more powerful than are EdD students; they have, collectively and individually, greater power than EdD students to shape the design, delivery and assessment associated with those programmes. Thirdly, it seems that there have been few scholarly investigations into the perspectives of EdD academics on the nature of the EdD. Hence, I consider that the present research addresses a gap in the literature.

I shall now explain briefly why I chose to use the word 'perspectives' in the title of the present thesis.



*All words begin as servants, eager to oblige and assume whatever function may be assigned them, but, that accomplished, they become masters, imposing the will of their predefined intention and dominating the essence of human discourse. (Pajares, 1992, p.308)*

Writers, in my view, often select and use words somewhat glibly, as if their meaning were both precise and transparent, yet in due course – perhaps on re-reading an emerging text – the full complexity and ramifications of each key term strike, quite possibly bewildering the writer’s mind. To generalise, some words (such as those for particular organisms or everyday objects: ‘sparrow’, ‘book’, ‘pen’) seem to be tied securely to well-defined referents or sets of referents, but others – perhaps especially those which are abstract nouns referring to concepts drawn from technical, scientific or philosophical fields – do not. Those who attempt to construct texts containing complex arguments must first make strenuous efforts to ensure that readers understand how key words are defined. This may be why Pajares (above) talks of words becoming “masters”. The present thesis contains numerous words and phrases which are, perhaps, of that kind – ‘criticality’, ‘doctorateness’, ‘originality’ ‘professional doctorate’, ‘professional practices’, ‘applied research’ and so on. However, let us consider ‘perspectives’, since that word occurs in the very title of this thesis.

In recent decades a considerable scholarly literature on teacher beliefs has developed – see, for instance, Nespor (1987) and Pajares (1992) – and this takes in the beliefs, attitudes and professional knowledge of pedagogues in higher education (Hativa & Goodyear, 2002). As Pajares (1992, p.309) points out, “distinguishing knowledge from belief is a daunting undertaking”. I have therefore included the word ‘perspectives’ in the title of this thesis with the intention that it should be regarded as a superordinate term covering both knowledge and beliefs – in this case about the EdD. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to explain why, in my view, both the knowledge (episteme) and beliefs (doxa) of EdD academics will contribute to their respective understandings of the EdD.

We have seen that Pajares (1992) notes the difficulty of distinguishing between teachers’ beliefs and knowledge, and this is echoed by many other scholars (Calderhead 1996, Ertmer 2005). The latter author attempts to make a distinction via an example from the professional context: a teacher may know how to use spreadsheets to keep student records, but may still not do so

because s/he does not believe that it will save time (Ertmer 2005, p.28). Transferring this sort of distinction to the domain of EdD programmes, an EdD academic may know that the QAA (2008, p.23) provides a set of descriptors intended to cover “any doctoral degree” awarded in British universities, but s/he may not believe that this is appropriate. Instead s/he may believe that some doctoral awards are superior to others.

One can argue, as Nespor (1987) does, that there is generally a greater affective investment in beliefs than in knowledge. Any educated British person will know, for instance, that Madrid is the capital city of Spain – and this knowledge will not generally cause the knower much emotion; it will be known dispassionately. By contrast, there are doubtless many people in the world (some Spanish) who believe that Spain is a wonderful country and who are willing to expound upon this topic with some enthusiasm. Thus, it can be argued that beliefs are more intricately bound up with emotion or affect than is knowledge. Nevertheless, as with so many potentially distinguishable yet related terms, it seems reasonable to envisage considerable overlap. For example, there are certainly those who are ready to say (following the Book of Job, and with passion) that “I know that my redeemer liveth” – even though some presumptuous or sacrilegious individuals (including the present author) would no doubt recommend substitution of ‘believe’ for ‘know’ in the English version of the biblical text.

Consequently I regard the term ‘perspectives’ as suitable for the title of the present thesis because its use precludes the necessity of specifying and maintaining a distinction between knowledge and belief. Examples of what might be termed ‘knowledge’ and ‘belief’ are certainly evident in the written comments offered by questionnaire respondents and in the GT interview transcripts. There are numerous cases in which subjects offer what appear to be dispassionate observations. When questionnaire respondent 7 observes that “PhDs in some parts of the world, like the US, are done with a combination of taught coursework and research based theses”, this can be taken as the neutral reporting of knowledge. On the other hand, when GT interviewee Y states that the choice of examiners “should be the student's decision”, s/he adds that “BTW I feel very strongly about this” – an explicit linguistic signal that not only rationality but affective factors are at work.

Having decided to investigate the perspectives of academics about key aspects of the EdD, I faced a decision on how to do so. I adopted a 'narrowing strategy' through which a lengthy and broadly-based questionnaire took soundings on a range of issues, and analysis of its data led to the identification of three key foci of investigation for follow-up interviews. I now provide a brief justification for this approach. Comments on the 'narrowing strategy' itself are given in the next section (3.1.2). First I shall explain in general terms why I felt that a questionnaire and follow-up interviews would be a successful means of collecting data relevant to my three research questions.

In the introduction to this thesis I indicated that the impulse for the present research arose from the realisation that the EdD was not universally regarded as of equal standing to the PhD in Education. I thought it important to try to ascertain, openly and explicitly, whether any EdD academics held negative views. Initially I reasoned that this would best be done by interviewing all EdD programme leaders in the UK. However, this could probably only be achieved by government-funded or government-initiated research, probably carried out by a team of high-calibre researchers. As a part-time EdD student living outside the UK, a more pragmatic approach was needed.

I compiled a list of universities in Britain running EdD programmes, but because this was dauntingly long, I decided to focus on England. Accordingly, I extracted from my original list a total of 42 universities in England which, at that time (early 2009) had an ongoing EdD programme. I decided to design a questionnaire to be sent to the programme director at each of the 42. This would consist mainly of propositions to be rated on a five-point Likert scale, to establish the degree of agreement. There would also be opportunities for subjects to insert comments in their own words at various points. For the final questionnaire see Appendix B.

My reasoning for this approach was as follows. Firstly, it is a common experience for new researchers, or researchers working alone, to be overwhelmed by the volume of data their research instruments generate (see, for instance, Mauthner & Doucet 2003, p.414). I hoped that by restricting my sample to a single individual at each of 42 universities I would not generate more data than I could cope with. Second, I hoped that by establishing contact with at least one

academic at all or some of the 42 universities, I would (at a later stage) be able (through this prior contact) to arrange follow-up interviews which would enable both a degree of triangulation (comparison of questionnaire responses and interview data) and a tighter focus on issues selected as of particular interest from the questionnaire data. Thirdly, I began to realise that my research could well be regarded as investigating, in part, the *beliefs* of EdD academics. I agree with Borg (2011, p.370), who cites published work from a range of psychological and philosophical perspectives in discussing his work on teachers' beliefs about research. He suggests that “beliefs are propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change.” My initial thoughts about the view of academics on the EdD ran along similar lines (albeit two years before Borg wrote this). The views of EdD academics are tacit: they need to be drawn out. They provide a basis for action: for instance they will, consciously or unconsciously, affect what and how each individual teaches on an EdD programme; how s/he assesses EdD coursework; how s/he comments on EdD coursework; how s/he behaves as an EdD examiner; and how s/he reaches decisions as EdD examiners. For these reasons it seems clear that an investigation into the perspectives of EdD academics is overdue, and a combination of a wide-ranging questionnaire followed by more tightly-focused interviews (of some sort) seemed a workable way to proceed.

The three research questions in the present study address the perspectives of EdD academics on the EdD. I found it difficult to imagine how these research questions could begin to be answered purely through the collection of quantitative data. I therefore proceeded in the way indicated.

### *3.1.2 The narrowing strategy*

I shall now briefly explain the 'narrowing' strategy I adopted in the conduct of the present research. First a wide-ranging questionnaire (4.1) was issued to subjects in order to gather initial data on the perspectives of EdD academics on a range of matters relevant to the nature of, and assessment of, EdD programmes. The subsequent online interviews (4.2) then investigated just three inter-related issues and were conducted with a selected sample of seven of the 27 subjects who completed the questionnaire. The basis for selecting the three issues and the seven subjects is explained later. However, here I would like to prefigure and justify the general approach

adopted: from a lengthy 38-item questionnaire (completed by 27 subjects, thus generating over a thousand individual responses to closed Likert scale items), to a set of interviews based on just six questions (two for each area of interest), thus providing 42 'free' spoken responses from the seven subjects (see Table X).

<b>Questionnaire (Broader)</b>	<b>Google Talk Interviews (More Focused)</b>
38 items	3 areas of investigation (6 questions)
27 subjects	7 subjects
1000+ (38 x 27) closed item responses	42 (6 x 7) 'open' responses

**Table 2: The 'narrowing strategy'**

Mercer (2005, p.139), an educationalist who investigates classroom discourse, argues that one common feature of much qualitative research is that “categories used are often generated through the analysis: they are outcomes, not prior assumptions brought in to sort the data.” I would like to suggest that this is a feature of the present research. It was begun with a very general problem space in mind. From reading and from anecdotal evidence I observed that in some quarters the EdD seemed to be regarded as inferior to the PhD, and I wanted to know to what extent the academics teaching on EdD programmes subscribed to this view. I also had the half-formed notion that academics' attitudes towards the EdD might have an effect on their teaching and on their judgements when assessing student work. I speculated that there might, in particular, be effects on the conduct and outcomes of viva voce examinations, and began to think about both the reliability and validity of the viva as a form of assessment (if, indeed, it always *is* a form of assessment). Consequently, even after piloting (see 3.1.3) I began with a 38-item questionnaire. But as the entirely anonymous respondent 27 noted in an open response: “Flippin' heck, Brian. This is a long questionnaire.”

In fact, I used the 38 questionnaire items as a basis for identifying three overlapping areas of concern. These involve how the individual academic

- *conceives of the EdD in relation to the PhD in Education area (standing, purposes, outcomes)*
- *understands what can or should be achieved in a shorter EdD thesis (than in a longer*

*PhD thesis) in terms of such factors as originality, criticality and contribution to the field*

- *sees the viva voce examination (for instance, as a 'rite of passage', as a contributor to 'academic community building', or as something else)*

This three-part list is presented as a Venn diagram (Appendix H), which highlights how all three aspects potentially overlap in an individual academic's conception or construction of the EdD. The Venn diagram helped crystallise my thinking when moving on from the wide-ranging questionnaire to the tighter focus of the Google Talk interviews. As with all aspects of external reality, the EdD is probably perceived and described differently by every observer. This may additionally be compounded by the fact that it is a complex artefact, recently constructed, and abstract in nature.

It has been argued above (3.1.1) that the present thesis aims in a modest way to fill a gap in the literature. It also aims to provide conclusions which will stimulate EdD academics themselves to examine how best to plot the future of the EdD in Britain, and seeks to identify a number of areas in which EdD practices might be questioned and perhaps refined.

### *3.1.3 Drafting and piloting of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire was compiled based on detailed reading of relevant scholarly literature (Chapter One) but may well also have been influenced by my experiences as a PhD student (Reading), MPhil student (Portsmouth), EdD student (Bath) and as a lecturer in two UK universities (Surrey, Portsmouth). I shall not attempt an explanation of the origins of every item, but (for instance) most of the items 9-28, which probe perspectives on the EdD viva voce examination, arise from Park (2003). Items 15-18 constitute a good example of the exploratory nature of the questionnaire. They address issues such as whether factors such as personality, gender, cultural background and mother tongue can affect the conduct and outcomes of the viva. With the benefit of hindsight, I now regard these items as superfluous, although such matters are briefly alluded to, for instance, by Tinkler & Jackson (2002, p.89). They do, perhaps, focus on matters worthy of research – but in fact, if so, each might be worthy of a doctoral thesis in its own right. Attempting to address each through a single item was misguided.

At the draft stage, the questionnaire was sent to two experienced EdD academics: one at a

university in the midlands, and another at a university in the south-west. Based on their feedback, both the wording and the layout of the questionnaire were reconsidered and, in places, amended before it was sent out to subjects. There were three principal issues which had to be addressed on the basis of the feedback: double-barrelled questions (Oppenheim, 2009, p.126), leading or loaded questions (Oppenheim, op. cit., p.137) and questions which one or both of the informants found to be vague, ambiguous or otherwise opaque. Remedial action was taken on the informants' advice, but I assume full responsibility for the questionnaire in its final version – flawed as it undoubtedly is (see, for instance, my earlier comments on items 15-18). It is also possible that had the questionnaire been less “clunky” (an apposite adjective used by the first academic about the draft) a higher response rate might have eventuated. For example, a more IT-literate researcher might have made use of resources available at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

Once re-redrafted, the questionnaire was sent by email, with a suitable covering letter, to a named representative of each EdD programme running in universities in England (see Appendix C). This was normally the EdD programme director, and generally s/he completed it and/or forwarded it to colleagues (although this, of course, did not always result in completed questionnaires). In a few cases the EdD programme director apparently did nothing, and in one case only s/he replied to my email by saying that, after consultation with colleagues, it had been decided with regret that it was not possible to co-operate in any way.

It may be argued that a questionnaire incorporating statements to be rated on a Likert scale is not the ideal means of gathering data on the complex issues under consideration. To this there are two responses. Firstly, as has already been made clear, I was working alone and at a great geographical distance from my subjects. Secondly, the questionnaire was seen only as a preliminary step through which I could identify issues which provoked a range of views or on which there was virtual unanimity. These insights could then go forward into the design and conduct of the follow-up Google Talk interviews.

Overall, the questionnaire enabled me to collect data in a relatively structured way (because the respondents all answered the same questions), while, at the same time, respondents had the freedom to insert comments in their own words in various dedicated spaces, noting their own

personal reactions to, and additions to, the issues raised. The questionnaire's instructions encouraged respondents to do this, wherever items stimulated urgent thoughts. In this way a balance was struck between collecting standardized data (because respondents all addressed the same items in the same way, by choosing points on a scale), and individualized data (because of the active encouragement to provide written comments).

At the outset, the aspiration was to obtain a minimum of one response from at least half the universities in England offering an EdD programme. Some 42 universities in England were, in fact, identified<sup>3</sup> and the target was therefore a minimum of 21 replies. In each case a digital copy of the questionnaire was sent by email in mid to late 2010. If no reply was received within six weeks, a second copy was sent. In due course, 16 universities had provided one or more replies. Although this fell below the target of a response from 50% of the identified universities and cannot match the reach of a recent QAA survey (n.d.), it compares reasonably well with the twenty universities surveyed by Jackson & Tinkler (2001) and substantially exceeds the limited data reported by Taylor (2008). Furthermore, several universities provided two or more responses so that the total number of responses (27) did, in fact, exceed the minimum target of 21. Better response rates could almost certainly be achieved by a large, funded research project (which is perhaps warranted in this area), but in hindsight little more could be expected in response to 'cold' emails from a largely unheralded researcher using a Gmail address. The 27 responses received from 16 universities provide at least a snapshot of the perspectives of some academics teaching on EdD programmes.

A question arises which may be dealt with very briefly, as I regard it as a digression. If 27 responses were received from 16 universities, by what term should we label this small sample of the population? For instance, should we regard them as 'self selecting'? Probably not, as in many cases they were contacted directly, by name (Dear Professor Bloggs, Dear Dr Snooks), and invited to participate. Do we, then, have a 'convenience sample'? Catts et al. (2001, p.39) provide a definition of convenience sampling as occurring where "participants have been selected from

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<sup>3</sup> The number of universities offering an EdD programme is constantly shifting. For instance, Cambridge University (see <http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/courses/graduate/doctoral/edd/>) and Nottingham Trent University (see <http://www.hkct.edu.hk/cie/EdD/ntu.html>) recently began to run such programmes. Hence there may well (in 2012) now be more than 42 universities in England with a functioning EdD programme – though as Tight (2011) points out, even counting the number of universities in the United Kingdom is no longer non-problematic.



available populations.” In fact, in the present research, the sample is divided approximately sixty-forty between those who were contacted directly (as EdD programme directors) and those who responded after the questionnaire was forwarded to them *by* their programme director. There might be a concern if all the subjects were 'self selecting', since those who choose to answer a questionnaire may sometimes be individuals who 'have an axe to grind' and who may not be representative of a population as a whole. For instance, this may be true of respondent 27 (see 4.1. below). However, in the sample under discussion we have a mixture of those directly invited (programme directors) and those who received the questionnaire at second hand. In either case, there was no compulsion to complete it, and I am very grateful to those who did. As Ebel (1980, p.130) puts it “responding to some questionnaires may require much time and thought, for which the respondent receives no reward” – except, in this case, the opportunity to tick a box (see Appendix B, p.141) and receive results.

#### *3.1.4 The Venn diagram*

The Venn diagram (Appendix H) illustrates the overlapping and interacting nature of three constructs which may contribute to the way an individual conceptualises the EdD. The first element (uppermost circle) is the individual's conception of the EdD seen in relation to the PhD in Education. The second (left) is the individual's understanding of what can be achieved in an EdD thesis, which is, of course, much shorter than a PhD thesis. The third element incorporates the individual's perspectives on the purposes of the EdD viva voce examination, and on its strengths and weaknesses as a form of assessment.

The three constructs are presented as a Venn diagram partly so as to illustrate that comparison very often plays an important role in how individuals perceive or conceptualise particular phenomena. It seems unlikely, for instance, that EdD academics at all times think of the EdD and the PhD in Education as separate and hermetically sealed entities: rather, perspectives on, and characterisation of, one is likely to involve consideration of the other as a point of comparison. It may also be the case that the PhD (longer-established, and most often the terminal degree held by EdD academics) will serve as the benchmark (the ‘norm’) and the EdD (more recently established, less often the terminal degree of EdD academics) as, perhaps, a ‘deviation’ from the norm. The individual EdD academic’s position in regard to the first construct (upper circle) is

likely to influence perspectives on the remaining two, since understanding of the basic nature of the EdD must surely colour views on assessment. An issue which might fall into the unoccupied (no text) segment between the left and right circles could be that of the relationship between assessment of the EdD thesis itself (text) and the EdD candidate (person, personal skills).

### *3.1.5 The Google Talk online interviews*

Before going into more detail about how the questions for the Google Talk (GT) interviews were chosen, and how the interviews proceeded, I would first like to offer some justifications for the choice of this medium in the first place. The reader may wonder – bearing in mind that face-to-face interviewing was problematic for reasons of geographical distance (Oman to England, Singapore to England) – why, for instance, interviews were not conducted using Skype.

As we have seen (section 3.1.2) the present research rests on a narrowing strategy. The impetus for the research was the general observation (from personal communication) that the EdD was not always regarded as the equal of the PhD. This standpoint was then discovered in scholarly literature on doctoral education (for example, see Taylor 2008). I became interested in the extent to which academics actually teaching on EdD programmes shared this perception since, if they did, this might have direct and indirect effects on programme and module design, academic standards and approaches to assessment. The 38-item questionnaire was the outcome of this interest. Analysis of the questionnaire data then led to the distillation of three areas for investigation, each to be pursued via two questions. In essence, then, the present research evolved from a general impression (EdD not always regarded as equal to PhD); to a list of questionnaire items which, though probably over-long, crystallised this; to six interview questions which addressed what I came to regard as issues of particular interest. The choice of some form of interview for this last stage of data collection came about because in this final phase the following was needed:

- *explanations from EdD academics offering greater detail and depth of discussion than had been collected via the questionnaires (even allowing for the written comments added by some respondents)*
- *a degree of interactivity with the researcher so that elaboration or views on closely related issues could be sought*
- *the spontaneity (and possibility of being caught 'off guard' or of reduced 'guardedness') which can probably only occur in real time communication*

The first option considered was face-to-face interviews, requiring me (as researcher) to travel from university to university, with a recording device, to interview each chosen subject. This was rejected on grounds of both cost and available periods of leave.

The second option was Skype (a well-known software application which facilitates audio and video calls over the Internet). However, Skype is generally blocked by the state telecoms provider in Oman, and when I moved to Singapore I faced other obstacles to its use. My employer (the Singapore government) would not allow me to download the necessary software to my work computer. In my rented Singapore apartment, meanwhile, the wireless Internet connection was not stable and occasionally crashed. For instance, a Skype call to Leeds (as a test) resulted in a crash. I therefore decided that Skype was unworkable, since crashes during research interviews would undermine any face validity I might have as a researcher (with the subjects) and tend to dissuade them from agreeing to a second (or third) interview to compensate for a crash or crashes. I therefore experimented with Google Talk (GT), a freeware voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) applied available freely from Google Inc. As well as enabling real-time spoken interaction between individuals in different countries, it also allows real-time texting (synchronous written interaction). This last facility proved reliable (no crashes) when tested with friends (twice) internationally via the fluctuating wireless Internet connection available from my Singapore flat. Subsequently there were no crashes during the seven interviews I conducted for the present research.

One should not ignore possible shortcomings of this form of 'interviewing' (if we allow this term to be used not only for face-to-face and telephone interviewing, but also computer-mediated synchronous interactive texting). For instance, Irvine (2011) found that telephone interviews tend to elicit a smaller amount of spoken data from respondents than do face-to-face interviews. She attributes this to the fact that interviewers appear to 'hold the floor' more in phone interviews than in face-to-face ones. She also notes that interviewees appear to elaborate less in telephone interviews than they do in the traditional face-to-face interview. It is perfectly possible (though it has not, to my knowledge, been investigated) that synchronous computer-mediated texting may suffer from this disadvantage too. However, approximately 10,700 words of data (including the

interviewer's questions and comments) resulted from the seven interviews conducted.

An advantage of Google Talk was that it allowed the full transcript of each interview (as typed by the participants) to be saved immediately (at the end of the interview) as a Word document. I then removed typographical errors and sent a copy – in the 'clean' state – to each interviewee, for reference. There were no cases in which typographical errors appeared to obscure meaning or led to ambiguity. None of the subjects raised any doubts about the transcripts they received. In addition to Word, all transcripts were in due course saved in AntConc, a freeware concordance program designed by Dr Laurence Anthony of Waseda University, Japan. The value of this software to the present research is that it produces short concordances (linguistic contexts) for any search word or phrase, thus facilitating data search and analysis.

Before proceeding with the GT interviews, the questions, the medium, and the researcher's interviewing method and style were all piloted with a single EdD academic at an English university. I reflected immediately on the experience, taking into account the transcript of the interview, and summarised my reactions in writing. I also sought reactions from the interviewee him/herself. The main points recorded were:

#### Self as interviewer

- *There were no 'crashes': the interview proceeded smoothly and uninterruptedly*
- *There was little or no muddle or overlap in the interaction (as sometimes happens, in my experience, when synchronous chat takes place between students and lecturers using Blackboard or Moodle). Interviewer and interviewee took turns without typing at the same time as the other. (GT shows on screen when an interlocutor is engaged in typing)*
- *I realised that in the 'real' interviews I should cut and paste each question into the GT window, in order to reduce the time elapsing while the interviewee waited for the next question to appear. Only additional spontaneous questions or comments should be typed word by word*
- *I became aware (after examining the transcript and discussion with my interviewee) my interviewing style was too mechanical, adhering absolutely to the six questions and not teasing out nuances in the interviewee's views.*

#### Interviewee

- *Suggested that I should explicitly tell interviewees not to address typographical*

- errors as I (the researcher) would do so later. I took this advice, as the transcripts show (See Appendix J, lines 3-4).*
- *For the pilot exercise, the interviewee was not informed of the questions in advance. My initial feeling was that this would increase the possibility of collected 'unguarded' data from subjects. However, the pilot interviewee suggested that giving the questions to informants beforehand would allow them thinking time and lead to a richer discussion. I came to agree with this view, and acted on it.*

The duration of the pilot interview was approximately 30-35 minutes. This was the length of time I had in mind: about five minutes per question with a few minutes for initial welcoming chat, farewells, and perhaps the occasional detour during the discussion. I had chosen this length, also, because I felt that half an hour or so would be the maximum that busy academics would be willing to devote to an unknown researcher from a university other than their own. However, after the pilot exercise (with its rigid unelaborated questioning) I realised that longer interviews would be necessary. When contacting my chosen subjects, I mentioned one hour and in fact most interviews were of 65-70 minutes. A less deferential approach, both in terms of the initial time guidelines communicated to subjects and in interviewing style, probably resulted in a greater amount of data. I am extremely grateful to all those EdD academics who took the time to complete the questionnaire and in seven cases also to be interviewed.

Selection of the seven GT interviewees from the 27 questionnaire respondents is further discussed in detail in 4.2 below. This was done on the basis of the questionnaire data. Nine subjects were chosen, with two of these being alternates, regarded as equally suitable in terms of their questionnaire responses. When contacted, one of the alternates and one other potential interviewee politely declined, citing pressure of work. It is regrettable that the second of these individuals was the questionnaire respondent with the most even distribution of responses: eight 'strongly agree'; eight 'agree'; five 'neither agree nor disagree'; seven 'disagree' and ten 'strongly disagree'. However, this withdrawal still left seven interviewees with distinctive questionnaire profiles of different types. Two of these were chosen because they used only the three mid-points in the five-point Likert scale (agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree). Two were chosen because they had the highest and second highest incidence of the use of point 3 on the Likert scale (neither agree nor disagree). Three were chosen because they had the highest, second highest and third highest total of selections of points 1 and 5 on the scale (strongly agree; strongly disagree). The seven academics who were interviewed, therefore, could be seen as

having responded to the questionnaire in ways which indicated either no great strength of view (use of midpoints, use of point 3) or alternatively quite definite views (high combined use of 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree').

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Questionnaire and Interview Data Analysis**

#### **4.1 The Questionnaire**

As already indicated, the 38-item questionnaire was sent to one academic (normally the EdD programme director) at each of 42 universities in England. This took place during April 2010. The covering letter asked that the questionnaire either be completed by the individual who received it and/or forwarded to colleagues teaching on the EdD programme. Anonymity for both the subjects and their universities was guaranteed, but information was collected about each person's highest qualification and academic experience. Where there was no response, a polite reminder was sent. In due course a total of 27 responses was received: 26 (via email) by the end of June 2010, and the 27<sup>th</sup> via conventional mail some months later, after re-direction. This last response was returned via his/her department secretary, rendering the individual anonymous even to me, although the university is known. An earlier anonymous response was sent unsigned via a deliberately opaque Gmail address, but reported the name of the university in a short covering message. Cases such as these, in which respondents strove to conceal their identities, might indicate that the response rate would have been higher if absolute confidentiality had been automatically provided.

The eventual 27 responses came from a total of 16 different universities in England. Two or more responses were received from three universities. One respondent was an EdD academic I had previously worked with, and to him/her I wrote personally, despite the fact that s/he was not the director of the EdD programme in his/her university. No reply at all was received from 25 universities, while in one case the programme director responded that my questionnaire had been discussed in a meeting, but that it had been decided with regret that no assistance could be provided.

The response rate may be considered relatively low, but it should be remembered that none of the people contacted (with the exception of staff at the University of Bath) were personally known to me. To have received replies from almost 40% (38.10%) of the universities may

therefore not seem such a poor return. It also compares very favourably with, for instance, the amount of data collected by Taylor (2008).

A range of experience and qualification is displayed by the 27 respondents (see Appendix D). 20 hold a PhD as their highest qualification, while 6 have an EdD and one has an MPhil. All but five have been EdD programme leaders and 18 of the 27 have acted as EdD external examiner (with some of the remaining nine reporting experience as PhD external). 22 of the 27 have experience as internal examiner for the EdD. The number of years of experience of EdD teaching shows a good spread: 13 have ten years or more; 9 have five to nine years; four have one to four years; and a single individual reported less than one year of experience at the time of completing the questionnaire. Nine responses were received from seven post-1992 universities, while the remaining eighteen responses came from nine pre-1992 universities. From data which remains private (to guard anonymity), I can reveal that of the 25 subjects who submitted the questionnaire to me using their name and title, fifteen are male and ten female. Eight of the 25 used the title 'Professor' when submitting. I would argue therefore that, by chance, the sample of 27 EdD academics contains within it individuals who are less and more experienced and who come from older and newer universities. The fact that almost three-quarters of the respondents hold a PhD is also almost certainly representative of EdD academics across English universities as a whole.

It has been stated already that essentially qualitative methods are employed in the present thesis. However, simple statistical information was compiled on the basis of the questionnaire data. Jamieson (2004) lucidly summarises the reasons why most (though not all) academics avoid the use of means, standard deviations and the performance of parametric tests on Likert scale data. It is argued that the Likert scale is an ordinal scale, not an interval scale. In other words, as Jamieson (2004: 1217) puts it “the intervals between values cannot be assumed equal” - although the impulse for her paper is that, according to her observation, researchers in medical research, at least, often do make this assumption. Here I have provided (see Appendix E) information on the response of each of the 27 subjects on each of the 38 items, and in addition the mode for the set of responses for each item (since this is a measure of central tendency widely recognised as appropriate for Likert scale data). I have also provided a mean and a standard deviation for each item. I do so because the standard deviation (although inappropriate if one assumes that intervals



between pairs of points on the Likert scale should not be seen as equal) nevertheless gives a rapid impression of the degree of dispersion of responses. It will also be noted that in all 38 items, the mode and the mean 'agree' (though this does not always happen). Where the mode is 4 or 5, the mean is always greater than 3; where the mode is 1 or 2, the mode is less than 3; and where the mode is 3, the mean is close to 3. There are two bi-modal cases and one tri-modal. In these cases the mean is close to the midpoint of the two or three modes.

#### *4.1.1 Questionnaire Data and Discussion*

I shall now discuss the questionnaire data in more detail, focusing on the Likert scale data; written comments are discussed later here, as well as in 4.2 in conjunction with the interview data. Items 15 to 18 are disregarded, for reasons explained in section 3.1.3 above. They address issues such as whether factors such as personality, gender, cultural background and mother tongue can affect the conduct and outcomes of the viva, but (with hindsight) do not relate closely enough to the research questions and are therefore set aside.

We cannot know how each subject interpreted the statements which were presented to them as questionnaire items or what factors influenced the responses they gave. Nevertheless, it could be argued that certain questionnaire items have the potential to yield tentative evidence of the general orientation of each respondent to the EdD. For instance, it might be plausible to suggest that those who disagree or strongly disagree with items 1, 2, 30 and 34 may have a generally positive position on the value of the EdD as a programme and academic award. Supporters of the EdD might not, for instance, regard the presence of taught modules in the structure of a doctorate as an inherent weakness, nor expect EdD theses to show less originality than those submitted for PhD. Here are the items:

- 1. The PhD represents the gold standard and other forms of doctorate are slightly inferior.*
- 2. The more taught/assessed modules a doctorate contains, the more it departs from the doctoral 'gold standard'.*
- 30. One should expect less 'originality' in an EdD thesis than in a PhD thesis because of the latter's greater length.*
- 34. Compared to the PhD, the EdD has a weaker claim to be called a "research doctorate".*

For item 36, the scenario is reversed. We might expect those with a generally positive view of the EdD to agree or strongly agree, while those with a generally negative view might disagree or strongly disagree.

*36. The EdD provides a different route to the same endpoint as a PhD on an education-related topic.*

Data on these three items (1,2,30,34 and 36) are tabulated below.

Respondent	Item 1	Item 2	Item 30	Item 34	Total	Item 36	Result	Type
1 (GT V)	2	4	2	2	10 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
2 (GT W)	X	5	1	4	X	4 (E)	X/E	U
3	4	4	3	2	13 (D)	4 (E)	D/E	HD
4	1	2	1	2	6 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
5	1	1	2	1	5 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
6 (GT T)	3	4	3	3	13 (D)	4 (E)	D/E	HD
7	4	2	2	2	10 (E)	3 (N)	E/N	HE
8	2	2	2	2	8 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
9	4	2	2	2	10 (E)	2 (D)	E/D	HE
10	4	4	4	4	16 (D)	3 (N)	D/N	HD
11	1	2	1	1	5 (E)	5 (E)	E	E
12	1	1	1	2	5 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
13	1	2	1	2	6 (E)	3 (N)	E/N	HE
14	1	1	2	2	6 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
15 (GT X)	4	2	2	4	12 (N)	2 (D)	N/D	HN
16 (GT Z)	1	1	1	1	4 (E)	5 (E)	E	E
17	2	1	2	4	9 (E)	X	E	E
18	3	3	1	2	9 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
19	1	1	1	2	5 (E)	5 (E)	E	E
20	2	2	2	2	8 (E)	3 (N)	E/N	HE
21 (GT U)	1	1	1	2	5 (E)	5 (E)	E	E
22 (GT Y)	1	1	1	1	4 (E)	5 (E)	E	E
23	2	2	2	3	9 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
24	2	2	2	2	8 (E)	2 (D)	E/D	HE
25	4	1	2	2	9 (E)	4 (E)	E	E
26	4	4	3	4	15 (D)	2 (D)	D	D
27	4.5	5	1	4	14.5 (D)	4 (E)	D/E	HD

**Table 3: Analysis of responses to questionnaire items 1, 2, 30, 34 and 36**

In Table 3 above, for each of the 27 questionnaire respondents, the numerical values (1-5) equivalent to each of the points on the Likert scale are totalled for items 1, 2, 30 and 34. A total of 12 is taken to indicate a neutral (N) position (since this is the equivalent of 4 NAND responses). A total of 13 or above is taken to indicate that the respondent is an EdD detractor (D) since the aggregate of his/her responses is greater than that achieved through 4 NAND responses. Those scoring 11 or lower are marked as EdD enthusiasts (E) since their aggregate is lower than four NAND responses.

In addition, responses to item 36 are considered. Those who agree or strongly agree are marked as enthusiasts for the EdD (E). Those who respond with NAND are marked as neutrals (N). Those who disagree or strongly disagree are marked as detractors (D).

By combining the first and second categorisations, each respondent either emerges with a simple overall rating, such as E (because both categorisations are the same) or else a hybrid categorization, like E/D, because the two differ (see ‘result’ column). The final column assigns each respondent a ‘type’, allowing column six (based on four items) to carry greater weight than column seven (based on one item only). The overall picture is as below:

Enthusiasts (E only)	15 <sup>4</sup>	
Hybrid Enthusiasts (HE)	5	(E/N 3; E/D 2)
Hybrid Detractors (HD)	4	(D/E 3; D/N 1)
Hybrid Neutral (HN)	1	(N/D)
Detractor (D only)	1	
Unclassified (U)	1	(Respondent 2)

In the first column of Table Y one can see which questionnaire respondents became GT interview subjects. Criteria for the selection of GT interviewees are explained in sections 3.1.5 and 4.2. However, we may note here that the seven interviewees are categorized as shown overleaf:

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<sup>4</sup> Including respondent 17, who did not respond to item 36

<u>GT interviewee</u>	<u>Categorisation</u>
T	(HD) Hybrid Detractor
U	(E) Enthusiast
V	(E) Enthusiast
W	(U) Unclassified
X	(HN) Hybrid Neutral
Y	(E) Enthusiast
Z	(E) Enthusiast

This sample reflects the overall picture reasonably well. For instance, 15 of the 27 respondents are ‘enthusiasts’ (55.56%), while 4 of the 7 GT interviewees are ‘enthusiasts’ (57.14%).

Although this selective approach to the data (focusing on only five items) facilitates the application of relatively crude ‘labels’ to all 27 respondents, a more thorough analysis of data from *all* the items is needed. This is attempted below.

In the table at Appendix F details are given for each item in terms of the numbers of respondents choosing each category (strongly agree, agree, NAND, disagree and strongly disagree). The largest group (often an overall majority of respondents) is also given for each item, whether this consists of those against the proposition expressed by the item (disagree + strongly disagree); those in favour of the proposition expressed by the item (agree + strongly agree); or those who neither agree nor disagree with the proposition (NAND). I shall now adopt an ad hoc stratification of the results for the questionnaire items:

- Category 1: items with strong majorities ( $\geq 81.48\%$  of respondents)
  - Items: 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 27, 28, 30 and 33 (9 in total)
- Category 2: items with majorities (51.85% to 77.78%)
  - Items: 1,2,3,4,5,7,10,11,19, 20,21,22,23,25,26,29,32,34,36,37,38 (21 in total)
- Category 3: items with no majority (40.74% to 44.44%).
  - Items: 8,24,31,35 (4 in total)

While this stratification is ad hoc, I offer a justification. Clearly, the sample is small (27 respondents) so that it would be unwise to read too much into the results. However, if an item were to result in all 27 respondents – each an individual who knows something or a great deal about EdD programmes - answering 'agree' or 'strongly agree' it would be foolhardy to dismiss this as arising by chance. I have taken the arbitrary view that if 80% or more of the sample opted for the 'agree' or 'disagree' side of the scale this is sufficient to form the basis for a tentative and

initial finding. In practice that means items with an 81.48% (or greater) majority.

The reader may, at this point, object that if the data are to be treated in this way the questionnaire itself should have featured a three-point scale (agree-NAND-disagree) rather than a five-point scale (strongly agree-agree-NAND-disagree-strongly disagree). However, my rejoinder is that had I provided a three-point scale I would have been making illegitimate assumptions about how the subjects might wish to respond. One can argue that there is an important difference between, say, feeling strong agreement (that, for instance, the PhD represents the gold standard and other forms of doctorate are slightly inferior) and feeling agreement only - a position which may be arrived at only on balance or even somewhat grudgingly. A five-point scale provides scope for respondents to reflect their degree of agreement or disagreement. However, if we look at the actual data (Appendix E) it can be argued that such shades of meaning turned out to be relatively unimportant in this case. For instance, what strikes one about the results of items 12, 13 and 14 is the great preponderance of selections on one side of the issue, rather than any large difference in the numbers of those choosing 'agree' versus 'strongly agree' or 'disagree' versus 'strongly disagree'. The approach adopted captures, I would argue, the general picture for each item, and for the set of items as a whole.

Seen in this way, therefore, the questionnaire data appears to provide some evidence that academics teaching on EdD programmes in English universities think that:

- (6). EdD programmes should aim to embed research into the practices of professional educators.*
- (9). The EdD viva voce examination is vital because the candidate's understanding of his/her work must be checked.*
- (12). The EdD viva voce examination is an important means of maintaining academic standards.*
- (27). EdD viva examiners should question candidates exactly as they would a PhD candidate.*
- (28). EdD examiners should assess the viva performance of EdD candidates exactly as for PhD candidates.*
- (33). Examiners should regard an EdD thesis as 'of publishable quality' if they can identify substantial parts of it which could be adapted into a journal paper or papers.*

By the same form of evidence, academics teaching on EdD programmes in English universities seem *not* to think that:

*(13). The viva voce examination is a more appropriate form of assessment for the PhD than for the EdD.*

*(14). EdD examiners should have the option of calling for a viva voce examination; it need not be compulsory.*

*(30). One should expect less 'originality' in an EdD thesis than in a PhD thesis because of the latter's greater length.*

I shall now turn to the four items which did not produce a majority for any of the three positions: agreement, disagreement, or NAND (category three). The propositions in each case were: 8,24,31,35.

*(8). In assessing an EdD thesis, examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge.*

*(24). In my experience some decisions reached by EdD examiners could be described as idiosyncratic.*

*(31). EdD examiners should think in terms of a clear-cut distinction: either an EdD thesis is original or it is not.*

*(35). Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more 'applied' and less 'theoretical'.*

Of the results for these four questionnaire items, it might be argued that those for item 8 stand out. This is because ten of the 27 respondents chose NAND. However, I shall treat these four items in the same way. That is to say, I shall regard them as items which did not produce a clear majority for any position and (in the case of the remaining three items – 24, 31 and 35) resulted in a spread of responses. For instance, item 31 provoked five responses of 'strongly agree'; six of 'agree'; six of NAND; six of 'disagree' and four of 'strongly disagree'. Strong attention should be paid, in my view, to item 31, where there seems to be some degree of disagreement about the nature of 'originality', a feature often cited as fundamental to work at doctoral level. Where EdD academics differ in their intellectual understanding of the nature of the EdD, variation in teaching and assessment practices may arise.

Having briefly inspected the items designated by their results to categories one and three respectively, the category two items remain. These items will not be discussed in great detail in the present thesis, as I instead concentrate attention on categories one and three. I want to argue that category one items have produced results (80% majority or more) which warrant further investigation in a larger-scale survey, and for which the follow-up interview data (though, again, limited) may provide some corroboration. I also want to suggest that the category three items

deserve further research because they led to such various responses. However, category two items are by no means set aside. For instance, four of the five items which featured in Table 3 above are from category two. Nevertheless it is an inevitable consequence of the 'narrowing strategy' mentioned earlier that not all 38 questionnaire items can be pursued via the limited (one hour) GT interviews.

Thirteen questionnaire items (the sum total of categories one and three) therefore, were considered in order to provide structure for the GT interviews. The approach I adopted was to synthesise from the thirteen items three areas of concern, each to be represented by two interview questions (that is, six compulsory questions to be asked in each interview). The three areas and six questions also take their form and focus from the three research questions (section 2.2). The way in which these six interview questions, the thirteen questionnaire items (categories one and three) and the research questions relate to each other is shown in Appendix I. While the relationship between the research questions, the category one and three questionnaire items, and the GT interview questions is not straightforwardly linear or watertight, there are clear thematic links between all three stages of the research process (research questions: questionnaire items: interview questions). Any small shifts in emphasis may be attributed to insights from new publications or newly-discovered publications, and the impact of data accumulating in the present research – all of which affected my thinking over the period of data collection and analysis. Category one items from the questionnaire (for which there was a majority of agreement or disagreement >80%) may be corroborated to some extent by the interview data, while category three items (where there was no majority in the data) can be further investigated. Category one and three items appear in the central column of Appendix I.

#### *4.1.2 Reflexive discussion on matters relating to the questionnaire*

Here I provide a few reflexive comments, in line with my earlier stated support for this form of researcher openness. I restrict my comments to matters relating to the design of the questionnaire and interpretation of the Likert scale data. Reflexive comments on the nature and conduct of the GT interviews appear in 4.3 below.

I have commented earlier that, if I were attempting similar research again, I would use tools such

as Survey Monkey to ensure that any questionnaire had a more professional look and allowed respondents absolute confidentiality. I would also reduce the number of items, as I believe that respondent 27 had a valid point (see 3.1.2 above) when s/he complained light-heartedly about the length of the questionnaire. A shorter questionnaire, presented in a more professional way, web-based, and guaranteeing absolute anonymity might have increased the response rate. I have also indicated that, in hindsight, questionnaire items 15-18 should have been omitted. They do, I believe, begin to address issues which are pertinent to the reliability of the EdD viva voce examination as a means of assessment. Indeed, GT interviewee X made remarks suggesting that linguistic and cross-cultural issues could cause friction in the EdD viva. However, I now see that questionnaire items 15-18 are not closely related to my three research questions and should therefore have been omitted. Their original inclusion probably sprang from an earlier fascination – which pre-dated my registration as an EdD student - with issues relating to the validity and reliability of doctoral viva voce examinations. This owed something to the apparent overturning (in the viva) of the legal principle of innocence until guilt is proven.

Having designed the questionnaire and collected the data, I also now realise that questionnaire respondent 17 made a telling point in his/her written feedback (after item 33):

*I find myself increasingly ill at ease with your questions because they presume so much about particular contexts. I would prefer to answer within the context of our own programme, rather than 'in general', which is how the questions are phrased.*

This comment raises a fundamental issue. The questionnaire could have placed all the statements (to be responded to on the five-point scale) in the context of “the EdD programme at your university”, rather than referring to “the EdD” - thus apparently carrying the assumption that 'EdD' is a term uniformly understood across the higher education sector in England. Respondent 17 goes on to wonder how valid conclusions can be on the basis of such questionnaire items.

I find respondent 17's comment both insightful and troubling. It is clear in the data that one or two others had thoughts about similar issues (for instance, questionnaire respondent 12 noted that some items appeared to “want my opinion” while others “seem to ask about how I think others perceive things”). However, I am not sure that taking the approach advocated by respondent 17 would necessarily have improved the present thesis. If I had required respondents to think only



of their own university's EdD programme when completing the questionnaire, the data would have been strongly affected by numerous variables associated with practice at each individual university. By adopting the approach I did, asking respondents to answer in the round (drawing for instance as respondent 14 says s/he does on “experience of other universities' EdD programmes”), there may be a tendency to reply in terms of what *generally* seems to be the case, thus helping to provide a picture of how, overall, EdD academics think 'the EdD' is similar to or differs from the PhD in Education. This, after all, is one of the key issues I want to investigate.

I was also somewhat unsettled when respondent 27's questionnaire arrived (late, by conventional post, and anonymously) since the views expressed are, in places, outspoken.

*On audio- or video-taping vivas: “Daft idea. Bin it.”*

*On recognising originality in a thesis: “We read this stuff for a living. We know when somebody is making an original contribution and when they are not.”*

*“I tend to steer the weaker students towards the EdD programme.”*

*“...you make no mention of the commercial aspect, although from the point of view of the University this is the main imperative for having an EdD programme. The EdD is a commodified version of a PhD. If you modularize a degree programme you can sell individual units of study, teach students in cohorts (economies of scale), and increase the rapidity of turnover. It does not matter so much if some students never complete the assignment for a unit: you've already made your money from tuition fees up front.”*

*“...people are more impressed if you say you have a PhD. They may not have heard of other kinds.”*

*And, in recording his/her highest qualification at the end of the questionnaire: “PhD (Of course!)”.*

Some other written comments by respondent 27 are extensive, insightful and, arguably, less controversial or forthright. I am very grateful to him/her for taking the time to answer all 38 items and to compose sometimes lengthy answers in writing. However, I am left in a quandary, which I shall briefly explain below.

Some of 27's comments are just informally worded (“Bin it”; “Flippin' heck, Brian. This is a long questionnaire”). However, others are less easy to interpret or categorise. On the identification of

originality in a thesis, s/he writes “We read this stuff for a living. We know when somebody is making an original contribution and when they are not.” Is that meant seriously? It seems to be. Yet at the same time it also appears to be a *prima facie* case of pre-theoretical, commonsense thinking. The comment “PhD (Of course)” seems to be intended mainly as a joke, although it may have a serious, pointed aspect, given the earlier belittling of the EdD – a programme, by his/her account, which mainly exists in his/her university for “commercial “ reasons, such as “tuition fees up front”, towards which “weaker students” can be steered.

On first reading these comments I felt exhilaration somewhat akin, perhaps, to that experienced by an investigative journalist to whom incriminating government documents are sent by a maverick civil servant. I have already hinted (2.3.3) that my politics (instinctive opposition to an unelected House of Lords) are somewhat of the old-fashioned Left. Respondent 27's attribution of the rise of the EdD to the need for UK universities to generate more of their own income, as state funding of higher education declines, falls squarely in line with my own acquired way of seeing these things. And, after all, could not respondent 27's talk of the EdD as a commodified doctorate be seen, rather easily, as a slightly less restrained version of Taylor's (2008, p.66) contention that “professional doctorates have represented a means to increasing the number of research students, by developing new markets.”?

Nevertheless, there is a disturbing aspect to respondent 27's remarks. S/he must be teaching (and probably supervising and examining) students who are following a programme in whose qualities s/he has no real belief. To what extent could this be happening generally on EdD programmes at universities in England? Recall that questionnaire respondent 2 (interviewee W) states that the EdD “lacks the respectability and credibility of the PhD” and “should now be phased out.” I shall not give undue weight to respondent 27's comments. Respondent 27 may be regarded as an 'outlier' in my data, and it is unnecessary to speculate any further here about how far his/her views (and those of questionnaire respondent 2 / interviewee W) are held by other EdD academics who did not contribute data to the present research. However, a larger scale research project might be warranted in this area.

I should like also to mention here valid points made (in written comments) about the design of

particular questionnaire items. Some terms used in the questionnaire items (such as “professional knowledge” in items 7 and 8) might need a gloss before subjects are able to respond meaningfully (respondent 4). Respondent 14 points out that questionnaire item 25 “isn't clear” because “the fact that variability isn't the greatest weakness doesn't mean it isn't a weakness”, while respondent 27 criticizes item 1 as “a double question” - something which I myself could say, with the benefit of hindsight, about other items. Designing good questionnaire items is not easy, and skill in this area probably requires extensive practice (which I lack). In some cases I probably also ignored suggestions given at the pilot stage, through misplaced enthusiasm for my own, original, wording of particular items. However, despite all the flaws (for which I alone take responsibility) the questionnaire did receive warm comments from a number of respondents, either on the questionnaire itself or in covering emails. For instance, respondent 11 wrote that “I found your questions really interesting...your research is very important” and respondent 19 commented: “Interesting! Hope you get a good response.”

We now turn to the interview data, in order to see what additional light is cast on the perspectives of EdD academics on the EdD.

## **4.2 Interview Data and Discussion**

In this section I shall discuss the interview data collected (see Appendix J for an example transcript). I have already briefly described (3.1.5) the way in which nine Google Talk (GT) interview subjects were selected, including two 'alternates' whose questionnaire profiles were very similar. In the event, one alternate and one other declined to be interviewed. The remaining seven interviewees were given letters (V to Z) and the table below shows in addition their questionnaire respondent number and the reason why each was chosen. The intention, of course, was to select a panel of interviewees showing representation both from those who responded very 'moderately' to the questionnaire items (high number of NAND responses; use of only points 2 to 4 on the scale) and those who often responded more strongly by choosing point 1 or 5. The seven interviewees consist of five males and two females. They emanate from six universities, with one post-1992 university supplying two interviewees. Four interviewees are from pre-1992 universities and three from newer universities. Three interviewees hold the title 'Professor' (one from a post-1992 university, two from pre-1992 universities).

<b>GT Interviewee</b>	<b>Characteristic of Questionnaire Responses</b>
Questionnaire Respondent 1 / Interviewee V	Used only points 2-4 on the five-point scale
Questionnaire Respondent 2 / Interviewee W	Third highest use of points 1 and 5 combined
Questionnaire Respondent 6 / Interviewee T	Highest use of point 3 (NAND)
Questionnaire Respondent 15 / Interviewee X	Used only points 2-4 on the five-point scale
Questionnaire Respondent 16 / Interviewee Z	Equal second highest use of point 3 (NAND)
Questionnaire Respondent 21 / Interviewee U	Second highest use of points 1 and 5 combined
Questionnaire Respondent 22 / Interviewee Y	Highest use of points 1 and 5 combined

**Table 4: Basis for selection of the seven GT interviewees**

#### *4.2.1 The nature and interpretation of written GT interview transcripts*

The interpretation of interview transcripts is problematic in that one can never be absolutely sure that one understands what the speaker intended. Secondly, even if this first obstacle is in some way overcome, there are difficulties in comparing the views expressed in one transcript with those expressed in another, since it is highly unlikely that two or more individuals will use precisely the same form of words. Below I briefly discuss these issues, and what I consider to be a possible pragmatic response to them.

It is surely non-controversial to state that similar views can be expressed using different forms of words. For instance, one interviewee may suggest that students who are less self-reliant or self-confident may benefit from EdD study because there is a greater group identity. Another interviewee may say that pursuing a PhD is a lonely experience. A third may speak of the additional support offered to EdD students by peers and tutors. To what extent are these interviewees saying 'the same thing'?

Resolving this kind of issue lies, I think, at the heart of any qualitative research which involves the interpretation of spoken or written accounts offered by subjects. Where research (as here) rests largely on a hermeneutic approach it can be argued, by detractors, that we are at the opposite pole from that occupied by the 'pure' objectivity claimed by naïve positivism. The view I have taken here is that a researcher can only suggest *similarity* between accounts or parts of

accounts, and should never state or imply that two accounts or parts of accounts are *identical* in meaning or intent. Furthermore, when a researcher proposes that two accounts or parts of accounts be taken as *similar*, this can only ever be regarded as *plausible* or *implausible* by a reader or group of readers, and never as *proven*. Finally, it is characteristic of meaning expressed through natural languages that particular words or expressions have fuzzy semantic boundaries and overlap semantically with other words or expressions (Aitchison, 1987, p.92). This may be the case with such words/phrases as “self-reliant”, “self-confident” and “not in need of inordinate support” which might be used by an academic when discussing the type of student sometimes claimed to be more suited to PhD study than to EdD study. This insight also supports the emphasis here on *similarity*, since written or spoken accounts or parts of accounts given by interviewees may show overlapping meaning rather than absolute correspondence.

It follows, therefore, that any grouping of responses or parts of responses from interviewees here is offered on the basis of my personal interpretation of the data, and the reader should consider how plausible s/he finds this, rather than scrutinising my interpretations with a view to finding them 'valid' or 'invalid' in any absolute sense.

#### *4.2.2 Conduct of the GT interviews*

Once all seven interviewees had consented to a GT interview, I agreed with each a day and time which was mutually convenient. The time slot was always in the early afternoon (UK time) because that allowed me to do the interviewing from home in the evening (Singapore time). All the interviews took place in the May to July 2011 period. In some cases I opened a Gmail account for the interviewee and explained how to log in to Google Talk. This procedure is reasonably intuitive and in all cases the interviews began around the agreed time and proceeded without interruption.

I shall here leave aside any drawbacks or revelations about GT as a medium for collecting respondent data which I noted during the seven interviews. Observations of this kind are provided in section 4.3 below.

I began each interview by reminding the subject not to worry about typographical errors (because

tidying these up themselves would consume valuable time and further slow the pace of the interchange of ideas). I then proceeded by pasting in each of the compulsory six questions at a suitable moment as the interview proceeded. This was much faster than typing and again reduced any hiatuses in the dialogue. The interviews differed somewhat in length (50 minutes to about 73 minutes) and in the number and type of follow-up questions asked. Following advice received after the pilot interview exercise, I tried at all times to be proactive, to tease out nuances in the initial replies and to seek views on what I saw as contingent or otherwise relevant issues. A total of 70 'questioning interventions' of this type occur in the seven transcripts. I use the term 'questioning interventions' rather than 'questions' because these frequently involved two or more inter-related questions rather than one, as below from the transcript of the interview with T:

*That's interesting! But how do you assess whether or not someone has genuinely contributed? Is it just that we rely on experienced academics to know? And if so, isn't that a pre-theoretical view of doctoral assessment?*

This kind of 'questioning intervention' (with two or more related questions) is quite common in the transcripts. Perhaps asking two or more related questions together is a form of interrogation typical of the present researcher. Alternatively, it may be that through the GT medium (not face-to-face) I often felt the need to offer two or more questions in order to be sure of getting my meaning across. In either case it is for others to decide whether or not this form of questioning is effective or appropriate in the context.

Of the 70 questioning interventions, fifteen occur in transcript T; twelve in transcript U; seven in V; ten in W; seven in X; ten in Y; and nine in Z. The following breakdown of the 70 – which is somewhat schematic as some issues/subjects overlap – is offered:

• <i>Comparison of the EdD with the PhD</i>	28
• <i>EdD viva issues</i>	15
• <i>EdD thesis and thesis assessment issues</i>	6
• <i>Definition and value of the term 'professional doctorate'</i>	5
• <i>Australian doctorates (generally no viva)</i>	5
• <i>Distinctive characteristics of the EdD in its own right</i>	3
• <i>Originality (as a defining characteristic of doctorateness)</i>	3
• <i>How EdD external examiners are chosen</i>	2
• <i>Criticality (as a defining characteristic of doctorateness)</i>	1
• <i>Full-time v part-time doctoral study</i>	1

The total length of the seven transcripts together is approximately 10,300 words. I have not counted the length of my own contributions to this total, but a rough estimate is that the overall interviewer to interviewee ratio is 30:70. By that very approximate measure about 7,200 words of interviewee data have been collected. I would suggest that some of the data (and some of the 'free comment' questionnaire data) is striking in its candour. I hope to illustrate this and to highlight other features of the data in the following section, in which this limited but relatively rare sample of the thoughts of EdD academics is investigated and interpreted.

#### *4.2.3 Interpretation of the GT interview data*

In principle there are, of course, several ways in which to investigate of data of this kind. One can look, as it were, horizontally, by proceeding through the six compulsory interview questions and looking for patterns of similarity or dissonance in the data from the seven interviewees. A second (vertical) way to proceed is to look at the overall perspective of each respondent, taking into account also his/her responses to 'questioning interventions'. A third possible approach would be to look at interviewee responses in relation to particular variables: very experienced academics versus less experienced; PhD-holders versus EdD-holders; those working at pre-1992 universities versus those at post-1992 universities. This last approach may not, in the present context, be appropriate. The sample consists of seven individuals, so sub-samples may only consist of three or four. It is difficult to imagine that results from a comparison of a group of four with a group of three (for example) could be accorded any particular weight. Bearing in mind also the word-limit for this thesis, I therefore decided to employ only the first two approaches (overall horizontal, overall vertical), although issues of comparison between individuals (such as years of experience, highest qualification and university type) are mentioned, particularly in the 'vertical' section. Accordingly I shall proceed to examine 'horizontally' and then 'vertically'.

#### *4.2.4 Horizontal (question by question) examination of the GT interview data*

*Question 1: When advising a student on which to choose, how do you characterise the main differences between the EdD and the PhD in an education area?*

Responses to this question relate to both research question one and research question three:

RQ1: *To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?*

RQ3: *To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of ‘originality’ or ‘original contribution’ in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?*

Given that both research questions refer to “common understanding”, we may begin by looking for similarities in the seven responses. Below I gather the data (from the relevant table in Appendix L) into a smaller number of categories, the first two of which may be seen as overlapping:

- *Modular structure (taught elements, assessed modules, EdD programme structure)*
  - *Mentioned by five respondents: T, V, W, Y, Z*
- *EdD study is more supportive (tutor support, group support, group collaboration, PhD study is lonely, EdD study boosts confidence)*
  - *Mentioned by five respondents: U, V, X, Y, Z. However, opposed by T and W.*
- *Professional orientation of the EdD (student's career plans, need for professional impact of the EdD thesis – and perhaps W's unelaborated reference to the distinctive “target audience” for the EdD)*
  - *Mentioned by four respondents: T, W, X, Y*

No other factors were mentioned by a majority of the seven respondents. We therefore have some basis for thinking that to the extent that this sample of EdD academics has a “common understanding” of the differences between the EdD and the PhD, this involves the EdD being a) modular in structure; b) more supportive of the student than “lonely” PhD study; and c) professional in orientation.

*Question 2: Do the EdD and the PhD (in an education-related area) offer the student different routes to the same skills-and-knowledge endpoint?*

Unlike interview question one, this is a polar (yes/no) question, though naturally respondents wanted to explain their responses and did not simply agree or disagree. However, the question type allows analysis of the responses into three categories: Yes (or generally yes); neither yes or no; and no (or generally no).

Although some respondents seek to hedge their agreement with qualifications or doubts, the general picture here is that this question finds a positive response. On reflection, it would have



improved question two if the words 'a similar' had been used instead of “the same”. This might, for instance, have saved respondent X the trouble of explaining why s/he felt that “equivalent end point” was more appropriate.

Responses to this question relate to both research question one and research question three:

*RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?*

*RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of ‘originality’ or ‘original contribution’ in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?*

We now move to consideration of GT interview question three.

*Question 3: When an examiner reads a doctoral thesis s/he is looking for an original contribution to knowledge. Is this just a yes/no decision (presence or absence of an original contribution) or is it necessary for the examiner to ponder the degree/extent of originality on display?*

GT interview question three clearly relates to research question three, as 'originality' is generally considered as one of the key criteria upon which judgements about the presence or absence of 'doctorateness' are to be made (Appendix A, Trafford & Leshem 2009).

*RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of ‘originality’ or ‘original contribution’ in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?*

In the data here we have a four to three split. Four respondents generally accept the notion that a judgement needs to be made about either the presence of originality in an EdD thesis, the extent of originality, or both (though even within this group there are divergences of view). The remaining three adopt a markedly different standpoint, raising fundamental objections rather than minor quibbles. Respondent T – a Professor and participant in about sixty doctoral vivas, with more than ten years of experience as an EdD academic – thinks that attention to 'originality' takes the examiner into “deep and murky water” and argues that it is problematic to decide which parts of even exceptional works of literature or music (Shakespeare, Beatles) should be labelled 'original'. Respondent V (also a Professor) sees doctoral assessment as “a judgement call for examiners” with “no hard and fast rules” - so a particular concentration on 'originality' is, for him/her, excluded. Finally, respondent W, who has “15 or 16 years” involvement in doctoral

work, claims never to have discussed 'originality' "either in a viva or outside". Taken together, the forcefulness of these three responses suggests that either the sample by chance contains particularly outspoken individuals, or that the views expressed by these dissenters may be held by others in the community of EdD academics in English universities. I therefore record a 'split' view on this issue from the data available.

*Question 4: Is the concept of originality essentially the same for an EdD thesis and a PhD thesis? Doesn't the greater length of the latter offer the student greater scope for originality?*

It may, perhaps, be assumed that the conformist or orthodox answer to GT interview question four would be 'yes' (originality is the same for both forms of thesis) and 'no' (the greater length of the PhD thesis does not offer scope for greater originality). For instance, the fact that the QAA provides descriptors covering *all* doctorates seems to indicate that this is the view universities and their academics are expected to subscribe to. One might therefore expect "the EdD gang" (to adopt W's subtly pejorative phrase) to toe this line – at least in dealings with students. However, under the cloak of anonymity we have a slightly different result. Four respondents (U,X,Y and Z) give a clear 'yes' to the notion that originality should be understood in the same way for both EdD thesis and PhD thesis. The other three, however, do not give a direct 'yes' at all, with T seeing 'originality' as irrelevant, W avoiding this part of the question and V suggesting that views on this will vary across universities. For the second part of the question (concerning the issue of whether the greater length of the PhD thesis gives more scope for originality), two give an unequivocal 'yes'; two an unequivocal 'no'; and one (V) gives a very marginal 'yes'. U's views on this might be on the 'no' side but cannot, I think, be established with confidence. T, of course, regards the issue of 'originality' as irrelevant or unhelpful, so does not reply directly.

Like GT interview question 3, question 4 relates to research question 3. As with GT interview question 3, I shall regard the response as split. While four out of seven see 'originality' as similar for EdD and PhD theses, three do not endorse this view. Three see the greater length of the PhD as offering no opportunity for more originality, while three (one marginally) take the opposite view - and T takes no view at all, seeing the question as irrelevant.

*Question 5: Does the viva assess the candidate or the thesis? Is doctorateness (doctoralness) a property of the candidate, the thesis, or both?*

As with GT interview question 6 (discussion below), GT interview question 5 clearly relates to research question 2, which asks whether EdD academics share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the viva voce examination. The second part of research question 2 (which asks whether doctorateness is a property of the candidate, the thesis or both) might be regarded as irrelevant to all three research questions. However, I would argue that it, too, relates to research question 2. Whether individual EdD examiners see doctorateness as residing principally in the candidate, the thesis, or both will surely impact their conception of the purposes of the viva.

Four of the seven respondents have little hesitation in answering 'both' to both parts of GT interview question five. In addition, V and Y also seem to reach the same conclusion while appearing to give greater weight to the thesis than the candidate. W sees an absence of clarity (presumably in the way that universities approach this issue) but ultimately, in a humorous way, tends towards seeing doctorateness as an attribute of the candidate. Overall, we have a majority of six (four strongly, two perhaps with slight qualifications) taking the view that doctorateness is a property of both the candidate and the thesis, and that the viva assesses both thesis and candidate. There is only one dissenter (W).

The fact that this sample of EdD academics strongly sees doctorateness as a feature of both thesis and candidate, and sees the viva as assessing both thesis and candidate too, may hint at an explanation to the response (from 27 respondents) to questionnaire item 14. Only two respondents (respondent 22 'strongly agree'; respondent 14 'agree') were willing to entertain the notion that EdD examiners could decide, in each individual case, whether a viva voce examination was necessary.

*Question 6: In your experience, do varying conceptions of the viva (each examiner, candidate) lead to misunderstanding or even friction during its conduct? If so, could you give an example of this happening?*

GT interview question 6 again relates to research question 2. It is probing to see whether respondents will agree that a possible weakness of the doctoral viva is that it can be

conceptualised in different ways by each participant, perhaps leading to awkwardness or worse among those present. It also shows the researcher (myself) attempting to gather data on an event (the doctoral viva) which I have never participated in, or witnessed at first hand.

Most respondents here (T, V, W, X, Y) seem to agree that friction or misunderstanding can occur during doctoral viva voce examinations, but attribute this to various causes. Only Y seems to agree that “varying conceptions of the viva” may be a central issue. T sees the main cause of friction as examiners “being pompous; being aggressive or arrogant (as in ‘I had a hard time during my viva and I am going to do the same here.’).” This last example (“I had a hard...same here”) seems to describe an examiner attitude which might be seen as a strong version of the ‘rite of passage’ view of the viva described earlier (see 1.1.4). V cites the difficulty of finding examiners who will make “fair judgements” and will be well prepared for the viva. Presumably V feels that where fairness or preparedness is somewhat lacking, friction can occur. W sees tension arising from conflicting views between examiners (external, internal) on changes needed to the thesis (which may occur outside the viva itself). X cites cross-cultural and language issues (candidates whose mother tongue is not English) as the most likely causes of misunderstanding.

Z has no experience of misunderstanding or friction at the viva. U has never been an internal or external examiner so is only able to report friction at her own “awful” viva – though this seems to have occurred outside the viva itself.

Perhaps the only conclusion one can draw from these responses is that misunderstanding and friction do sometimes occur in doctoral viva voce examinations in the field of education, but that this may have various causes (not only varying conceptions of the viva among participants). If one asks how frequently such problems arise, T (a very experienced academic) suggests that it has occurred four times in about sixty vivas from personal experience (approximately 1:15).

We now turn to a ‘vertical’ view of the GT interview data – that is, a description and interpretation of comments made by each interviewee (T to Z) across the range of issues. The questionnaire data of these individuals and their ‘open’ written questionnaire comments will also be brought into the discussion, for triangulation and for the purposes of further elucidation of the

overall perspective of each individual. In addition, data from follow-up GT interview questions outside the compulsory six questions (questioning interventions) will be brought into the discussion where this is relevant.

#### *4.2.5 Vertical (respondent by respondent) examination of the GT interview data<sup>5</sup>*

Reviewing all the data available for each respondent (GT interview data generated by both compulsory questions and by 'questioning interventions'; questionnaire Likert scale data; any written comments on the questionnaire) has the potential to create an overall picture of the individual's perspective on the EdD. It is hoped that this picture emerges vividly, in some cases, in the descriptions below.

##### GT interviewee T (questionnaire respondent 6)

GT interviewee T / questionnaire respondent 6 holds the title of Professor, is PhD-qualified and has more than ten years of experience teaching on EdD programmes. S/he has taken part in about sixty doctoral vivas (GT interview data), acted as an EdD programme leader/director and served as both an EdD external and internal examiner. We may therefore regard this individual as one of those in the sample with the most EdD experience of various kinds (teaching, supervising, examining).

GT interviewee T / questionnaire respondent 6 answered all 38 questionnaire items but did not offer any written comments. I shall first highlight any cases in the questionnaire data where this individual's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa).

For item 2 (the more taught modules, the more a doctorate departs from the 'gold standard') the mode is 2 (disagree) but this respondent answers 4 (agree). Exactly the same applies to item 23 (EdD vivas should consider both thesis and coursework assignments): the mode is 2 (disagree) but this respondent answers 4 (agree). For item 29 ("It is difficult to interpret what the term 'originality' means in the context of an EdD thesis"), the mode is 2 (disagree) but the respondent

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<sup>5</sup> For relevant data see Appendices K-M

answers 5 (strongly agree). Note that in answering GT interview question 3 this respondent (GT interviewee T) suggested that “we can get into deep and murky water with originality” and asked “who can decide how original was some of Shakespeare's stuff or the Beatles?” This suggests a consistency of view on this issue. There are no other responses which are 'in the opposite half' of the scale.

Some of T's comments during the GT interview have been noted earlier. S/he sees “professional orientation” as an important feature of the EdD and states that “the keyword for the EdD is that it is a professional doctorate.” (This can be contrasted both with Z's view that “a professional doctorate exists via institutional rules” but may well not exist “in actual activity” and with U's comment that the term ‘professional doctorate’ has “connotations of being second-rate”). T disregards ‘originality’ as a key feature of doctoral work: “I don't like this concept”; “we can get into deep and murky water with originality”. S/he sees doctorateness as being about both ‘product’ (the thesis) and ‘process’ (the candidate's development). T sees no problem if, in some cases, the viva is a “showcase” (the researcher's word) rather than an exam: “why not? The candidate deserves a chance to talk in depth about her or his own work after all the effort they have put in.” The lack of a viva in the assessment of most Australian doctorates is seen as a weakness: “The viva is a vital part of the examination process.” Friction in the viva can arise, in T's view, from examiner “bad behaviour” such as arrogance, aggression or pomposity. The notion of the viva as a “rite of passage” is, to T, redolent of “some kind of public schoolboy thing like being bathed in freezing water or being beaten” and s/he has no truck with it.

#### GT interviewee U (questionnaire respondent 21)

GT interviewee U / questionnaire respondent 21 holds an EdD and has one to four years of experience teaching on an EdD programme at a post-1992 university. S/he has no experience as an EdD programme leader/director nor as an EdD external or internal examiner. We may therefore regard this individual as one of the two least experienced EdD academics in the sample (see also GT interviewee Y / questionnaire respondent 22). GT interviewees U and Y are also the only EdD-holders; the others hold PhD.

GT interviewee U / questionnaire respondent 21 answered all 38 questionnaire items but did not offer any written comments. I shall first highlight any cases in the questionnaire data where U's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa).

This subject answered 1 (strongly disagree) to questionnaire item 3, for which the mode was 4 (agree). Item 3 states that “thesis-only” doctorates have greater prestige than those which combine a thesis with coursework. We may tentatively link the response of 'strongly disagree' with his/her later comment in the GT interview that the term 'professional doctorate' has “connotations of being second-rate and I don't feel second-rate” (as an EdD holder). Gregory (1995) asks (as an EdD holder himself) whether the EdD is in some ways superior to the PhD. It seems that (naturally, one might surmise) EdD holders are instinctively unwilling to see their highest qualification as being below par. By contrast the written comments of questionnaire respondent 27, a PhD-holder (“Of course!”) and EdD academic of five to nine years' experience, showcase strong views about the superiority of the PhD (“I tend to steer weaker students towards the EdD programme... I'm sure I'm not the only supervisor who does this.”).

For item 23 U answers 4 (agree), while the mode is 2 (disagree). The proposition in question is that the EdD viva should take into account both thesis and coursework. Similarly, for item 25 this subject agrees (4), while the mode is 2 (disagree), on an item which states that variability in examiner judgements is the greatest weakness in the EdD assessment process. It is possible, but no more, that this view is influenced by experience as an EdD viva candidate (s/he has no experience as an examiner) in which the examiners “did not necessarily agree” and “were not well matched”, leading to a viva experience which was “awful” and “unfair”.

For item 26 (EdD examiners do not receive specific training) the subject disagrees (2) while the mode is 4 (agree). The response here may well be shaped by the fact that, as a new academic, GT interviewee U has attended “an internal course...about supervision and viva” (GT interview data).

For item 35 (“Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more 'applied' and less

'theoretical'") the subject responds 1 (strongly disagree) against a mode of 4 (agree). We may again tentatively relate this to his/her GT interviewee comment that the term 'professional doctorate' has "connotations of being second-rate and I don't feel second-rate" (as an EdD holder). Conversely, for item 38 (which suggests the possibility that all doctorates should be PhDs, with certificates showing the route – thesis only or coursework plus thesis) this subject strongly agrees (5) while the mode is 1 (strongly disagree). Could it be that U feels that holding an award titled 'PhD' would protect him/her from "connotations of being second-rate" as a holder of a 'professional doctorate' (EdD)?

Though this should not be overstated, U's responses seem to contain indirect evidence of insecurity and truculence about being an EdD-holder him/herself. S/he does not like the term 'professional doctorate' because "it pulls away from being academic"; doesn't think "the EdD is easier than a PhD" and states that s/he has "met people with PhDs who are not so good at communication".

#### GT interviewee V (questionnaire respondent 1)

GT interviewee V / questionnaire respondent 1 holds the title of Professor in a post-1992 university. His/her highest qualification is a PhD and s/he has one to four years of experience teaching on an EdD programme (probably so little because the EdD programme is relatively new at the university concerned). S/he has experience as an EdD programme leader/director and as an EdD external, but not as an internal examiner.

GT interviewee V / questionnaire respondent 1 answered all 38 questionnaire items and also offered six separate written comments. I shall first highlight any cases in the questionnaire data where this individual's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa).

For questionnaire item 2, the respondent answers 4 (agree) while the mode is 2 (disagree). In fact seven of the 27 respondents either agree (5 respondents) or strongly agree (2) that the more



taught modules a doctorate has, the more it departs from the 'gold standard'.

Questionnaire item 24 asks for responses to the notion that “In my experience some decisions taken by EdD viva examiners could be described as idiosyncratic.” This subject chooses 'disagree', but the mode is point 4 (agree). Note that this one of the category three questionnaire items (with no majority for any of the three positions: strongly agree / agree; NAND; disagree / strongly disagree).

Item 25 suggests that “variability in viva examiner judgements is the greatest weakness in the EdD assessment process.” This subject agrees (4), but the mode is 2 (disagree). Taken together, this subject's responses to items 24 and 25 appear to suggest that s/he holds a slightly odd view, in which EdD examiners' decisions should not be called “idiosyncratic”, yet variability in examiner judgements is the greatest weakness in EdD assessment. The only written comment offered hereabouts by the subject (re item 25) is that variability in examiner judgements “applies to PhD vivas too.”

With the exception of items 2, 24 and 25 (discussed above) this subject's responses closely shadow the mode. However, one of his/her six written comments is striking: in response to item 38 (which suggests that all doctorates should have the title PhD, but with the certificate stating the route – thesis only or thesis plus coursework) this subject says “That is the way to second class-ness in my view. See them as equal but different routes.” This viewpoint stands in opposition to that of GT interviewee U, who (as we saw above) strongly agreed to the proposition in item 38.

In the GT interview V made some noteworthy comments. S/he says that “the EdD must be professionally based” but, interestingly, adds that “in practice pretty much all PhDs are too”. S/he also confirms his/her status as an EdD ‘enthusiast’ (see 4.1.1) by stating, when comparing EdD versus PhD graduates that “perhaps the EdD just edges it in terms of expertise”. On the characterization of ‘originality’ in relation to EdD theses, V says “that’s a hard one” and goes on to state that this is a “judgement call” for examiners. When asked whether doctoral assessment is therefore “is pre-theoretical or common sense” and “we just trust experienced academics to be

able to recognise what is or isn't doctoral", s/he replies "Yes, that's right." V notes that in visiting other universities s/he has heard talk of the distinction between "taught EdDs and research EdDs". S/he thinks "the viva is very important" (an implicit criticism of the assessment of Australian doctoral candidates). Finally, V highlights the difficulty of appointing appropriate External Examiners:

*It's a tough job for a supervisor to choose the right examiners, people who will be fair in their judgements. I have made some mistakes in my choices before.*

#### GT interviewee W (questionnaire respondent 2)

GT interviewee W / questionnaire respondent 2 holds a PhD, works at a pre-1992 university, and has more than ten years of experience teaching on an EdD programme. S/he has experience as an EdD programme leader/director and as both an EdD external and an EdD internal examiner.

GT interviewee W / questionnaire respondent 2 answered 35 of the 38 questionnaire items (offering no answer to items 1, 18 and 26) and also provided two written comments. I shall first highlight cases in the questionnaire data where this individual's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa).

Questionnaire item 2 states that the more taught modules a doctorate contains, the more it departs from the gold standard. This subject strongly agrees (5), while the mode is 2 (disagree). In commenting on all of items 34-38 (at the end of the questionnaire) the subject writes:

*I have 'taught'/supervised/examined EdDs for some years now and I have come to the conclusion that the EdD should now be phased out. It lacks the respectability and credibility of a PhD and this is detrimentally affecting research degree standing at doctoral level.*

Although these observations are recorded elsewhere in the questionnaire, they appear to offer some explanation for the response given to item 2. In the GT interview data the views expressed (a year or so later) by this subject on differences between the EdD and the PhD are slightly less stark, with phrases such as "I blow hot and cold" and adjectives such as "sceptical" employed, but the subject nevertheless states that "I sometimes wonder if we are doing our students a disservice by offering professional doctorates rather than PhDs." Overall, it is perhaps justifiable

to see the tenor of the views as similar across both sets of data, differing largely in the degree of outspokenness, rather than in underlying attitude.

For item 23 (which suggests that the EdD viva should consider both thesis and assignments) this subject responds 5 (strongly agree), while the mode is 2 (disagree). However, in my view, this result should be ignored, because the subject also adds a written comment which contradicts the response of 'strongly agree': "Only the thesis. Often candidates have moved on tremendously since completing assignments/essays/papers." On this basis I discount the subject's response on the Likert scale which perhaps was intended as a 1 (strongly disagree).

For item 25 ("variability in examiner judgements is the greatest weakness in the EdD examination process") the subject answers 4 (agree) but the mode is 2. For item 31 (which suggests that judgements regarding originality in an EdD thesis should be yes/no), this subject strongly agrees (5), while the item is trimodal (2,3,4), and is one of only five respondents (total 27) to give this response. It is intriguing that a NAND response was not given, for in GT interview data, the same subject (W) contends that s/he has "never had a conversation with anyone either in a viva or outside about originality!" (exclamation mark in original).

Given the subject's comments (above) about the EdD's lack of "credibility" and "respectability" it is perhaps unsurprising that s/he answers 'agree' (4) to the notion in item 34 that compared to the PhD the EdD "has a weaker claim to be a 'research doctorate'". The mode for this item is 2 (disagree).

It is instructive, in passing, to look at the responses of EdD-holders to item 34. GT interviewee U (questionnaire respondent 21) responds 'disagree' here; questionnaire respondent 5 (strongly disagree); 9 (disagree); 11 (strongly disagree); 17 (agree); and 22 (also GT interviewee Y – strongly disagree). Of the six EdD-holders, therefore, three strongly disagree and two disagree with this proposition. No subjects 'strongly agree' with item 34, but in addition to 17, five 'agree', and they are: questionnaire respondent 2 / GT interviewee W – under discussion - and respondents 10, 15, 26 and 27. With the exception of respondent 17, the others all hold PhD; three have ten years or more of experience with EdD programmes, while the remaining two have

five to nine years.

There appear to be two issues worthy of further investigation here. Firstly, do EdD-holders, in contrast to some PhD-holders, tend to reject suggestions that the EdD is inferior to the PhD? There appears to be some evidence here and elsewhere for such a tendency. Cross-referencing of Table 3 in 4.1.1 above with Appendix D shows that of the six questionnaire respondents whose highest qualification is EdD, five are classified as EdD enthusiasts. This compares with nine of the twenty whose highest qualification is PhD. There might also be interest in what factors best predict the holding of negative views about the EdD: Age in years? Years since completion of PhD? Employment in a pre- or post-1992 university?

GT interviewee W / questionnaire respondent 2 also replies 'strongly agree' (5) to item 38, which proposes that all doctorates should be PhDs, with the certificate showing the route (thesis only or thesis plus coursework). The mode is 1 (strongly disagree). The subject's views on this are consistent with his/her comments on the need to “phase out” the EdD.

In the GT interview, W states that “the PhD is still the 'gold standard' and in the eyes of many the EdD is the poorer relation.” S/he also talks in a rather scathing way of “the EdD gang” who do not “acknowledge the second class-ness of the EdD”. In his/her view the PhD has “more status” because “the EdD is about professional practice rather than (having) an explicit focus on scholarly knowledge.” S/he is “skeptical...that the EdD achieves the same level or depth of research skills/understanding as the PhD” and cites “the length of the thesis and the taught element to the EdD” – going on to explain that “PhD length provides more opportunities for reaching a higher standard.” This subject is “unclassified” in section 4.1.1 above due to an unanswered questionnaire item. However, the responses just noted provided grounds for seeing him/her as essentially an EdD ‘detractor’.

#### GT interviewee X (questionnaire respondent 15)

GT interviewee X / questionnaire respondent 15 holds a PhD, works at a pre-1992 university, and has more than ten years of experience teaching on an EdD programme. S/he has experience

as an EdD programme leader/director and as both an EdD external and an EdD internal examiner.

GT interviewee X / questionnaire respondent 15 answered all 38 questionnaire items and also provided one written comment (to the effect that “many universities” already audio- or video-record EdD viva examinations). I shall first highlight the nine cases in the questionnaire data where this individual's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa). Since nine of his/her responses run counter to the mode, this subject could be regarded as something of an outlier in the sample of seven GT interviewees.

For questionnaire item 1 (“The PhD represents the gold standard and other forms of doctorate are slightly inferior”) the mode is 1 (strongly agree), but this subject responds 4 (agree). For questionnaire item 3 the mode is 4 (agree) but the subject answers 2 (disagree). This item states that thesis-only doctorates tend to have greater prestige than those with taught courses. When we look at the subject's responses to items 1 and 3 we can only assume that s/he thinks the PhD represents the gold standard and has greater prestige even when taught courses form part of the learning experience.

For item 21 the response is 2 (disagree) while the mode is 4 (agree). This item suggests that recording the viva would provide good material for training new examiners. For item 25 (stating that variability in examiner judgements is the greatest weakness in the EdD assessment process), this subject answers 4 (agree) while the mode is 2 (disagree).

Regarding all of items 34 to 38, this subject's responses are always in opposition to the mode. Item 34 states that EdD has a weaker claim than the PhD to be called a 'research doctorate'. The subject agrees but the mode is 'disagree'. This response may perhaps be seen as consistent with his/her response to questionnaire item 1. For item 35 (“Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more 'applied' and less 'theoretical'”) the response is 2 (disagree) but the mode is 4 (agree). However, this is a category three questionnaire item – dispersion of responses and no overall majority for any position (agree/strongly agree; NAND; disagree/strongly disagree). For

item 36 the subject's response is 'disagree' but the mode is 'agree' in relation to the proposition that the EdD provides a different route to the same endpoint as the PhD in an education area. However, in this case the 'disagree' response may have been provoked by the subject's focus on a semantic nuance: when asked a similar question in the GT interview s/he took the view that the two types of doctorate provided different routes to “an *equivalent* end point” (my emphasis). Item 37 states that there is no need to have two awards (PhD and EdD) in the education area. This subject agreed (4), while the mode is 2 (disagree). For the final questionnaire item (38), the subject answered 'agree' (4), while the mode is 1 (strongly disagree). The item proposes that all doctorates in the education field should be PhDs, with the route (thesis or thesis plus coursework) specified on certificates. This respondent's replies to questionnaire items 37 and 38 appear to show a consistent attitude, but s/he is one of only four individuals (one of whom – GT interviewee U / respondent 21 - answered 'strongly agree' to both items) with a positive reply in both cases.

In section 4.1.1 above, this respondent is the sole person in the ‘hybrid neutral’ category: in other words, there seems to be little evidence that s/he is an EdD ‘enthusiast’. If anything, s/he is a pragmatist: “PhD is better training for a research career and EdD for non-research career.” GT interviewee X also focuses on the problems of doctoral candidates from other cultures or with other mother tongues: “I have experience of a Japanese woman who could not bring herself to challenge the authority of the examiners and hardly spoke.”

#### GT interviewee Y (questionnaire respondent 22)

GT interviewee Y / questionnaire respondent 22 is an individual who stands out from the group as s/he was unable to choose any of the categories for years of experience as an EdD academic. The lowest category was “one to four years”, but GT interviewee manually entered “less than one year”, making him/her the least experienced individual to have provided data to this study. S/he holds an EdD, works at a pre-1992 university, and has experience as an EdD external examiner, but not as an EdD internal examiner or as an EdD programme director.

GT interviewee Y / questionnaire respondent 22 answered 37 of the 38 questionnaire items

(omitting item 18 – which is anyway set aside) and also provided seven separate written comments. I shall first highlight the cases in the questionnaire data where this individual's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa).

There are five cases in which this subject's questionnaire responses conflict with the mode. For item nine (“The EdD viva voce examination is vital because the candidate's understanding of his/her work must be checked”), the respondent answers 1 (strongly disagree) while the mode is 5 (strongly agree). The GT interview data may (but only 'may') give a clue to why the subject responded to questionnaire item nine in this way. S/he agrees (“Yeah”) when the researcher (myself) suggests in a questioning intervention that perhaps the EdD viva does not need to ascertain whether a thesis is the student's own work, given that a number of the same student's long written assignments are held on file and given the supervisor's awareness of the drafting process. GT interviewee Y / questionnaire respondent 22 continues: “I've often thought that it would be harder to defend someone else's work anyway”.

For questionnaire item 10, the subject again responds 'strongly disagree' (1). The mode here is 'agree' (4). The proposition here is that the EdD viva voce examination is valuable because examiners have an opportunity to give advice/guidance. I have not been able to find any clear evidence in either the GT interview data or this subject's written comments on the questionnaire to establish why 'strongly disagree' was chosen here. However, this subject does say (GT interview data) “I'm not in the slightest bit convinced that the viva can be compared to anything at all” - which perhaps suggests a degree of scepticism towards it? S/he also states (questionnaire comment) that “I quite enjoyed the viva - but I am not quite sure if it was a necessary part of the process.”

Item 11 states that the EdD viva “should be seen as an essential rite of passage for candidates”. This respondent (a recent EdD viva candidate) responds 1 (strongly disagree) while the mode is 5 (strongly agree). Again, there is no direct evidence as to why the subject takes this view. Perhaps a hint arises when s/he states (GT interview data) that “what irritates me is when an examiner seems to think the process is about her/him.” It may be that GT interviewee Y would

agree with GT interviewee T who (as we have seen) associates the term 'rite of passage' with cold showers, beatings and public schools – and regards it with abhorrence. But this is speculation.

Item 14 reinforces the notion that this subject does not regard the EdD viva as absolutely essential. S/he responds 5 (strongly agree) to the notion that EdD vivas could be optional (taking place or not taking place at the discretion of the examiners), while the mode is 1 (strongly disagree).

Item 29 states that it is difficult to define what originality should mean in an EdD thesis. This subject strongly agrees (5), but the mode is 2 (disagree). For this response a quotation from the GT interview data seems to provide the motivation: “Ontologically one could argue the two extremes – that nothing can be truly original, or that pretty much everything is on a certain level.”

This interviewee provided long and thoughtful responses for both the questionnaire and the GT interview. It may be that, having completed his/her own EdD quite recently, s/he relished the opportunity to put into words the feelings (“I utterly disagree”; “I quite enjoyed my viva”; “I feel very strongly about this”) which this engendered. This subject also has a tendency towards the unhedged statement:

*Originality has nothing whatsoever to do with numbers of words.  
One is either original or not, you can't be more original or less so...  
What irritates me is when an examiner seems to think the process is about her/him...*

#### GT interviewee Z (questionnaire respondent 16)

GT interviewee Z / questionnaire respondent 16 is a Professor at a pre-1992 university who holds a PhD, has more than ten years of experience of EdD teaching, and has been an EdD programme director, external examiner and internal examiner. S/he is therefore one of the most experienced academics in the group of GT interview subjects.



GT interviewee Z / questionnaire respondent 16 answered all 38 questionnaire items but provided no written comments. I shall first point out the single case in the questionnaire data where this individual's response falls in the opposite 'half' of the five-point scale from the mode for any item (for example where the mode is 4 or 5 and the individual response is 1 or 2 – or vice versa). The fact that there is only one case of this happening may reflect the reason why this subject was chosen for the GT interviews: a particularly high rate of NAND responses.

For questionnaire item 26 this subject responds 1 (strongly disagree) while the mode is 4 (agree). The item states that EdD examiners do not generally receive formal training. In fact fourteen respondents chose 'agree' for this item and one selected 'strongly agree'. It may be that this subject's choice of 'strongly disagree' may be influenced by awareness of a training programme at his/her own university.

In the GT interview itself, this interviewee (Z) demonstrates his/her balanced or middle-of-the-road view of the EdD when revealing how his/her perspective has shifted over time:

*To be brutally honest I did initially think the EdD was 'less than a PhD'. Now I see 'parity of esteem' but difference.*

S/he also provides several mini case studies of students who have benefited from EdD study: a “lecturer at an African University who wanted taught module work as well as a thesis because she would be teaching similar modules back home”; an “MA student who never thought of doing a doctorate when he applied for the MA” but was able to transfer to the EdD; and an EdD student whose “starting point was well below what we’d expect” yet who has achieved “quite amazing academic development, lovely to be part of”. It seems that this subject has gradually been convinced of the EdD’s value by the cases such as these.

A tabulated content analysis of the responses of the seven interviewees (T to Z) to the six compulsory questions (but not to 'questioning interventions') is given in Appendix L.

#### *4.3 Reflexive observations on the nature and conduct of the GT interviews*

I have noted above (section 3.1.5) that Google Talk (GT) synchronous texting was selected as

the medium for the follow-up interviews for essentially pragmatic reasons. I shall first consider whether or not this had a deleterious effect on data collection (as compared with face-to-face interviews or the use of Skype).

GT interviewee Z states at one point in the transcript that there will be “some stereotyping of students in the following (due to typing as the mediator for this communication)”. It is impossible to be certain why s/he takes the view that typing a response will lead to stereotyping of students. Perhaps it is because a typed response (while the interviewer waits, in another country) is likely to be shorter, and therefore less nuanced, than a longer and more detailed face-to-face reply? Interviewee Z also says (at the end of the same response, to which the preceding comments act as a preface), “I’ll stop here simply because I’ve said a lot...” In GT interaction you type in some text and then wait for your counterpart to respond. The GT text window informs you when the other person is in the act of typing, so you are never concerned that the connection has gone down, or your interlocutor has been called away. Nevertheless, it sometimes seems a long wait until text appears in the window. This is perhaps why interviewee Z says “I’ll stop here” - s/he is conscious (or over-conscious) of how long I have been waiting. It is quite likely that GT interviews, as a medium for data collection, produce shorter responses than do face-to-face interviews. As we have seen Irvine (2011) reports that telephone interviews tend to elicit a smaller amount of spoken data from respondents (with less detail) than do face-to-face interviews. She also notes that telephone interviewers tend to speak more than do face-to-face ones. Both of these characteristics may also apply to GT interviews, though other than interviewee Z no-one commented directly on the medium, and the *quantity* of data generated seems quite large. However, interviewee Z’s comments and Irvine’s (2011) findings may have implications for the *quality* of the data.

Bowling (2005) offers a useful comparative overview of data collection by questionnaire (in the social sciences and some other disciplines) via various “modes” (including what she calls face-to-face; computer-assisted face-to-face; and self-administered computer methods). She identifies differences in the *quality* of data collected via different means – for instance (op. cit., p.288) she asserts that “more information may be obtained in interview than other situations, as interviewers

can motivate respondents, pause to encourage (more, longer) responses, and clarify questions” – but does not investigate channels of communication similar to GT interviewing.

A possible variable in any form of interviewing is the performance of the interviewer. For example, s/he could ask significantly more or fewer follow-up questions in some interviews than in others, or even ask different questions. However, this seems to have been largely avoided: the interview transcripts vary only a little in length and the six compulsory questions were asked, in order, with virtually the same wording. It should be noted, though, that as the interviewer I became slightly impatient with interviewee U – whose replies I found at times, rightly or wrongly, to be abrupt and not as penetrating as one might expect from someone holding a doctorate. His/her reply to compulsory question 2, for example, was “I think so”, to question 3 “both, I think” and to question 4 “Yes, I think so”. I tried to compensate for this by using immediate 'questioning interventions' and this generally elicited longer responses. I do not think my – probably unprofessional though slight – irritation was apparent to the subject, although this can best be judged by a third party reading the transcript. This may be an advantage of a GT interview – in a face-to-face, video or Skype interview facial expression or tone of voice might have conveyed my displeasure to the interviewee, thus potentially affecting his/her attitude and responses.

From my point of view (as the interviewer) the principal difference (and drawback) of the GT experience was that the interviewee's comments appeared as a sudden chunk of text, to be read and understood *after appearance* before typing one's own subsequent contribution. Bear in mind that interviewees saw the six compulsory questions ahead of time, so should have been ready to respond at least to those (though not to 'questioning interventions'). However, I (quite obviously) had not seen their answers, so had to read and respond in real time. This may occasionally have led to the faulty framing of 'questioning interventions': for example, in the interview with V, I suddenly asked a question about full-time versus part-time study which did not really fit my agenda or relate strongly to his previous comments. In a face-to-face interview one processes the other person's comments *in real time*, thus (perhaps) meaning that one is instantaneously ready to respond.

Ultimately I defend the use of the GT medium because face-to-face interviewing and interviewing by Skype were (for reasons of cost and time, and stability of Internet connection respectively) unworkable. I would never have gone ahead through GT if I had had grave doubts about the quality of the data it would produce, and I am content to let the reader judge whether or not, in the practical circumstances outlined, my decision was justified.

We are now able to draw out conclusions and implications from the present research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Limitations, Conclusions and Implications**

#### **5. Introduction**

In this final section, based on the data collected, and keeping in mind the three research questions, I shall draw out the conclusions and implications of the present study. However, before doing so I shall indicate some limitations of this research project. These are almost self-evident, but I add them for completeness and with due regard for the importance of explicitness in reporting research.

#### **5.1 Limitations of the present study**

I have been able to identify four main limitations of the present research. Firstly, if more than 40 universities in England offer an EdD programme, there could be, at any time, five hundred or even a thousand academics who teach on such programmes. I have received completed questionnaires from 27 of them, and interviewed 7 of those 27. The data collected is not insignificant in quantity and scope (at least in comparison with some other published research in a similar area, such as Taylor's (2008) study), but I cannot claim that my sample of academics is representative of the population as a whole. Hence, strong claims should not be made on the basis of the data collected. Instead, such tentative findings as are reported should be seen as providing a basis for the construction of hypotheses to be tested in subsequent, larger-scale research. Some suggestions for further research or debate are made in section 5.3 below.

Secondly, although from the outset the design and conduct of my research was governed by what I conceptualised as a 'narrowing process' (from a wide scattering of questionnaire items to a more tightly-focused set of six GT interview questions – two for each of three key issues), as an inexperienced researcher I made mistakes. I have already alluded (section 4.1.2) to cases where I now accept that questionnaire items were phrased in such a way as to cause confusion in some respondents. In fact, such confusion may have led, occasionally, to respondents answering according to their own individual interpretation of an item, and thus to a set of Likert scale data

for that item which is not amenable to reliable analysis.

Thirdly, the GT interview data may (to some unquantifiable extent) be somewhat less rich than data which could have been obtained from the same interviewees by face-to-face or Skype interview.

Finally, the quality of research design and conduct as a whole has probably been adversely affected by my inexperience as a researcher. In what is the best short explanation of the nature of “good quality research” I have so far seen, Borg (2010) concludes by listing seven questions which he suggests should be asked by each researcher of his/her own research. The third of these is: “Have data been collected and analyzed in a technically competent manner?” When I attempt to answer this question as truthfully as I can, I think of two kinds of aeroplane, the streamlined Concorde and the early biplanes constructed by the Wright brothers and other pioneers.

Orville and Wilbur Wright (and those who designed and constructed planes soon after their era) were responsible for the production of flying machines which (to my non-technical, non-specialist eyes) appear to feature, quite apart from two pairs of wings, numerous struts, wing-nuts, and quite possibly loosely flapping bits of canvas. The research reported here resembles this sort of plane far more than the elegant Concorde (produced after many decades of cumulative human experience of the design, testing and flying of new models of aeroplane). It includes elements whose design is not ideal; elements which in retrospect serve no great purpose (such as questionnaire items 15 to 18); and the results reported below emanate from only a proportion of the data collected. Hence, it cannot be said that the overall design of the research is a model of efficiency.

However, I would claim that it, nevertheless, 'flies' – and this I will attempt to demonstrate in the following section.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

In this section I shall offer conclusions arising from the three research questions and their

investigation through the questionnaire and GT interview data. The ‘narrowing strategy’ led eventually to the six compulsory questions in the GT interviews:

- How does the EdD differ from the PhD in an education area (5.2.1)?
- What is the nature of the 'originality' looked for in an EdD thesis (5.2.2)?
- What are some purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination (5.2.3)?

In drawing conclusions on the three issues, I shall bring in (where appropriate) data from all areas of the data: questionnaire Likert scale data; questionnaire written comments; GT interview data (compulsory questions) and GT interview data (questioning interventions).

### *5.2.1 Differences between the EdD and the PhD in an education area*

We have already established (4.2.4) that the GT interview subjects, taken as a whole, appear to describe the EdD to prospective students as being modular in structure, more supportive of the student than “lonely” PhD study, and professional in orientation.

We have also seen (4.2.4) that the general view of the GT interview subjects is that the EdD does indeed take the student to the “same” (or, at least, similar or equivalent) skills-and-knowledge endpoint as the PhD in an education area. It should be noted here, however, that one subject voiced strong reservations about this. GT interviewee W (4.2.5) “blows hot and cold about this” and in questionnaire comments (respondent 2) thinks the EdD “lacks credibility” and should be phased out.

We can also use questionnaire data in seeking to discover how EdD academics see the main differences between the EdD and the PhD. In order to do so, I shall examine relevant items I have labelled 'category one' (where 80% or more of responses fall on either the 'agree' or 'disagree' side of the data), or 'category three' (where there is no majority for either the 'agree' side, the 'disagree' side, or for NAND)<sup>6</sup>.

There appears to be agreement that EdD programmes should aim to embed research into the practices of professional educators (questionnaire item 6) and this might be seen as in harmony

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<sup>6</sup> For definition of categories one, two and three, see 4.1.1

with the view that the EdD is professional in orientation. However, item 35 (on whether the EdD should be seen as more 'applied' and less 'theoretical' than the PhD) produced a 'category 3' result (12 in favour, 5 NAND and 10 against). Item 8 also resulted in an indecisive outcome, indicating that there is no clear position in the data on the question of whether or not examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge in assessing an EdD thesis. It should be noted, though, that responses to item 8 include a high NAND quotient (10 out of 27) and this could be because respondents found the item difficult to understand, rather than that they genuinely had a non-committal position.

Two written comments in the questionnaire data may cast light on the apparent discrepancy between responses to item 6, on the one hand, and item 35 (and perhaps 8) on the other. Regarding questionnaire item 6, respondent 14 (who responded 'agree') states that “the EdD should facilitate this, but...it's for the individual student to do the embedding.” This may be intended to mean that the EdD should be a programme which provides students with an opportunity to immerse themselves in scholarly literature, and to discuss and dispute with EdD academics and fellow students, but that 'application' of what is learned to the professional context is the responsibility of the student, not the programme. The second comment which may provide illumination is offered by respondent 27 who offers Lewin's (1952) dictum that “there is nothing more practical than a good theory.” Responses to item 35 may have been influenced by the notion that a clear-cut 'theory' *versus* 'application' distinction is not valid. Instead the two may be seen as mutually constitutive and intermingling – and thus, when confronted with item 35 (which embodies the stark simplicity typical of many questionnaire items), respondents may have been uncertain how to answer.

From the data the general perspective of EdD academics on how the EdD differs from the PhD in an education area is that:

- the EdD is modular in structure
- the EdD is more supportive of the student than is “lonely” PhD study
- the EdD is professional in orientation
- the EdD aims to embed research into the practices of professional educators

However there is no agreement at all ( $2SA + 10A = 12$ ;  $NAND = 5$ ;  $8D + 2SD = 10$ ) on the issue



of whether the EdD is more 'applied' and less 'theoretical' than the PhD.

### *5.2.2 The nature of 'originality' required in an EdD thesis*

There is a four to three split among respondents in relation to GT interview question three, which asks whether, when looking for an original contribution to knowledge, this is simply a yes/no decision (presence or absence of an original contribution) or whether it is necessary for the examiner to ponder the degree/extent of originality on display.

Responses to GT interview question four also reveal a split. Four out of seven see 'originality' as the same for both EdD thesis and PhD thesis, while three do not endorse this view. Three see the greater length of the PhD as offering no opportunity for more originality, while three (one marginally) take the opposite view - and T takes no view at all, seeing the question as irrelevant.

Questionnaire item 30 (which stated that less originality might be expected in an EdD thesis than a PhD thesis because of difference in length) produced a very strong (category one) response of disagreement (with 11 respondents strongly disagreeing and 12 disagreeing, from a total of 27 responses).

In contrast, item 31 evoked a 'category 3' response (11 in favour, 6 NAND and 10 against). This item stated that EdD examiners should think in terms of a clear-cut distinction under which either an EdD thesis is original or it is not.

Item 32 suggested that examiners should focus on the publishable quality of an EdD thesis rather than on originality. This produced a category two response: approximately 70% (19 of 27) respondents disagreed.

Item 33 stated that an EdD thesis should be regarded as of publishable quality if examiners could identify substantial parts capable of adaptation into one or more journal papers. A 'category one' response resulted: 23 of 27 respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Interviewee Z's comment that "in any thesis I'm looking for potential journal papers" may perhaps reflect the position of some other EdD academics – but, at the same time, this sample of respondents seems unwilling to see

'publishable quality' replace 'originality' as a major criterion for the award of a doctorate.

From the data the general perspective of EdD academics on the nature and place of originality in relation to the EdD thesis is that:

- 'originality' is a more important criterion than 'publishable quality' in deciding whether a thesis is doctoral
- one should not expect less originality in an EdD thesis than a PhD thesis (even though the former is substantially shorter)

But

- there is no clear agreement among the seven GT interviews on whether EdD examiners should essentially make a yes/no decision (presence or absence of originality in a thesis) or whether the degree/extent of originality needs to be considered
- two GT interviewees (T and W) doubt the value of originality as a criterion for award of an EdD to a candidate on the basis of his/her thesis

Overall, the limited data collected indicates some degree of disagreement about the nature and importance of 'originality' in relation to the EdD thesis.

### *5.2.3 Purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva*

Questionnaire item 9 produced a 'category one' response, with 24 out of 27 agreeing that the EdD viva is vital because the candidate's understanding of his/her work must be checked. Items 12, 13, 14, 27 and 28 also produced 'category one' results. It was agreed (item 12: 25/27 in favour) that the EdD viva is an important means of maintaining academic standards. The notion (item 13: 23/27 against) that the viva voce examination was more appropriate for PhD than EdD was opposed. The proposition that EdD examiners could have the option of calling for a viva (if they felt it was warranted – item 14) resulted in 23/27 respondents disagreeing. It was agreed (22/27) that EdD viva examiners should question candidates exactly as for PhD. Finally (item 28) it was agreed (24/27) that EdD examiners should assess the viva performance of EdD candidates exactly as for PhD candidates.

In the GT interviews, questions five and six addressed the viva. Question five asked whether the viva assesses the candidate or the thesis, and whether doctorateness is a property of candidate, thesis or both. Interviewee Z's response is much shorter than those of the other respondents' but is typical: "This is easy... 'BOTH' is the answer to both questions" (upper-case in original). Three

other GT interviewees agreed wholeheartedly with Z, and two more agreed with slight reservations. Only W hinted at a lack of clarity in relation to these matters.

Question 6 asked whether varying conceptions of the viva (each examiner, candidate) could lead to misunderstanding or friction during its conduct. Five out of seven respondents here (T, V, W, X, Y) seem to agree that friction or misunderstanding can occur during doctoral viva voce examinations, but attribute this to a variety of causes (such as pompous or aggressive examiners [T]; unfairness or lack of preparation on the part of examiners [V]; conflict of view between the two examiners [W]; and cross-cultural or linguistic issues [X] where the candidate is from a non-western and/or non-anglophone background. Y is the sole interviewee who seems to agree that “varying conceptions of the viva” may be a central issue.

On the basis of these GT interview responses it seems that misunderstanding and friction do sometimes occur in doctoral viva voce examinations in the field of Education, but that this may be due to various causes (not only to varying conceptions of the viva among participants). GT interviewee T (a Professor at a post-1992 university) states from personal experience that significant friction has occurred four times in about sixty vivas he has participated in. He also speaks vehemently against examiners who see the doctoral viva as a rite of passage, bracketing such individuals with those who are “pompous” or have 'bees in their bonnets'.

From the data the general perspective of EdD academics on the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva includes the following characteristics:

- the EdD viva voce examination should be retained as part of the assessment process
- EdD examiners should not have discretion to waive the viva even if they feel this to be appropriate
- the viva is essential for checking the candidate's understanding of his/her thesis
- the viva is an important means of maintaining academic standards
- the viva is not a more appropriate means of assessment for the PhD than for the EdD
- EdD viva examiners should both question and assess students as for the PhD
- the viva assesses both thesis and candidate (doctorateness is a property of both thesis and candidate)
- misunderstanding or even friction can occur in the viva and is due to a variety of factors (mostly aspects of examiner behaviour, attitude or preparation)

It is worth noting, I think, that while there seems to be strong support in the data for the EdD

viva as a compulsory part of assessment and guarantor of academic standards, questionnaire item 24 (“In my experience some decisions reached by EdD examiners could be described as idiosyncratic”) produced a category 3 response, with 12 agreeing, 7 NANDS and 8 disagreeing. The mode was 4 ('agree'). Of the 12 respondents who responded 'agree' (10) or 'strongly agree' (2) to the notion that some decisions reached by EdD examiners might be regarded as idiosyncratic, no less than 8 'strongly agreed' that the EdD viva, nevertheless, was important for the maintenance of academic standards (item 12), with a further three responding 'agree'. Comparison of these two items, in combination with responses to GT interview question 6, may allow a further tentative conclusion about the perceptions of this sample of EdD academics:

- the EdD viva voce examination is largely sound and should be retained, but the attitudes, behaviour and preparation of a few individual examiners can undermine its efficacy

A final footnote here is that the above observation may also be considered in the light of GT interviewee V's comment that “It's a tough job for a supervisor to choose the right examiners, people who will be fair in their judgements” and GT interviewee Y's very strongly-felt view that the choice of examiners should be the student's.

We may now pass judgement on what the present research has shown us about the three research questions.

*RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?*

There appears to be agreement that the EdD is professional in orientation and aims to embed research into the practices of professional educators. There is also some evidence that EdD academics generally take the view that the EdD carries the graduate to a similar or equivalent skills-and-knowledge endpoint as the PhD. However, there is no clear consensus on whether the EdD is more 'applied' and less 'theoretical' than the PhD. There is no evidence, either, of common understanding on whether examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge in an EdD thesis.

*RQ2: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination?*

The main finding here is that EdD academics, in general, display strong support for the

continuation of the EdD viva voce examination as a compulsory part of EdD assessment. They regard it as important for the maintenance of academic standards; as a key means of checking whether a candidate understands his/her thesis; and as similarly appropriate for both EdD and PhD. They think that EdD examiners should question and assess EdD candidates just as they would PhD candidates.

There are indications that, on occasion, misunderstandings or even friction do occur in the EdD viva. In the limited data here, such occurrences seem to be attributed to examiner factors such as behaviour, attitude or preparation which fall short of the ideal.

Despite the general perception that the EdD viva voce examination is vital, there are views on both sides about the issue of whether or not some examiner decisions could be described as idiosyncratic. Some EdD academics here attribute unusual decisions following the viva to factors connected with the individual examiner.

*RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of 'originality' or 'original contribution' in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?*

The main findings here relate to the issue of 'originality' as a criterion for diagnosing doctorateness in a thesis or candidate. There is evidence of general agreement on the notion that originality is a more important criterion than publishable quality in deciding whether an EdD thesis is at doctoral level. Similarly, this sample of EdD academics appears to agree that the length of the thesis (EdD *versus* PhD) should not alter examiner expectations about the degree of originality shown. Interview data suggests tentatively that there may be disagreement on how to decide whether the thesis is at doctoral level in originality. Some regard this as a yes/no decision (presence or absence of at least some originality), while others seem to feel that the extent of originality must be considered. Four out of seven GT interviewees see 'originality' as the same for both EdD thesis and PhD thesis, while the other three take the contrary view. Finally, some subjects doubt the value of originality as a criterion for award or non-award of an EdD following thesis scrutiny and viva voce examination. Thus, the limited data here provides some support for the contention that 'originality' is a problematic notion for which a "common understanding"

does not exist across all EdD academics.

### **5.3 Implications for further research or debate**

This section includes proposals for further research, all of which have some bearing on current EdD practices, along with a brief sketch of the means by which such research can be carried out. I indicate three broad areas which might be fruitful for further research or could form a basis for discussion or consultation among EdD academics.

#### *5.3.1 Audio or video recording of EdD viva voce examinations*

The first proposal concerns audio or video recording of EdD viva voce examinations. Questionnaire items 20, 21 and 22 (which each suggested a single advantage of such recording) met with 'category two' mildly positive responses, while item 19 (which stated, based closely on the statement of one of Park's (2003, p.7) informants that recording of vivas would be an affront to the examiners) provoked mild disagreement. Meanwhile, questionnaire respondent 15 / GT interviewee X says in questionnaire comments that many universities already record vivas and questionnaire respondent 26 states boldly that “video-taping may be unnecessarily intrusive but there can be no objection to audio-recording.” Taken together these responses suggest that there is at least some support for the recording of vivas, with evidence that it already takes place in some universities (see questionnaire respondent 15's comment for items 19-22 in Appendix G).

On the basis of the present research I suggest that one or more universities which already audio or video record EdD vivas should be encouraged to write a discussion paper, based on evidence from all stakeholders (in the manner of Park's (2003) working party). This should include details of the pros and cons of such recording, borne out of stakeholder experience, and should conclude with a list of suggested 'good practices'. This could form the basis for a one-day or half-day meeting of all interested EdD programme directors.

One focus of the report could be the “friction” which is attested by GT interviewee T – which s/he claims has occurred in four of about sixty doctoral vivas s/he has attended. Does “friction”

occur less often than T's one viva in fifteen rate when audio or video recording takes place? Clearly, both examiner 'bad behaviour' and viva friction should be minimised, and the one to fifteen ratio, though relatively low, is surely susceptible to improvement if stronger safeguards are introduced. Could audio or video recording be one of these?

### *5.3.2 Perceptions of 'originality'*

The second proposal concerns the concept of 'originality' and the 'original' contribution to knowledge required of an EdD thesis. As Lovitts (2006, pp.169-171) notes, in reporting deliberations by American academics across a range of disciplines, the issue of the nature of originality and of an original contribution at doctoral level is certainly not unproblematic. Lovitts (op. cit., p.170) reports that some academics (for instance in the literature area) “emphatically and categorically rejected the notion of originality” as a criterion for the assessment of doctoral theses, seeing their discipline as recursive rather than progressive. Philosophers argued that it was difficult to do something completely new in a field which has existed for at least 2,500 years, while mathematicians highlighted the debate in their field over whether mathematics is discovered, invented or composed. Meanwhile, in UK, a QAA survey (n.d.) contributes a definition of ‘originality’ offered by one academic – “If an examiner has his/her view added to and hence changed....then the contribution must necessarily be original” – while noting the discordant contribution of another – “originality is a red herring.” It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that we have seen (above) some evidence of disparity of view among EdD academics about the importance of ‘originality’ and about what it should be taken to mean.

It is surely possible to concur with GT interviewee Y when s/he states that “ontologically one could argue the two extremes – that nothing can be truly original, or that pretty much everything is on a certain level”. However, I disagree with him/her (and find his/her comments to be inconsistent and incompatible) when s/he states (also in the GT interview) that “one is either original or one is not, you can't be more original or less so”. I would argue that, indeed, “pretty much everything” is, in one sense, original – and for an EdD thesis this is checked by ascertaining that it is not copied from a previous source or sources. Once this test has been passed, it is 'original' at GT interviewee Y's lowest level. From that point (not copied) to the remarkable and unusual point of 'highly original' (groundbreaking, truly innovative in a radical

way) is surely a cline and, as such, a given thesis might sit anywhere along the continuum. This argument is further developed below.

As the first two sentences of Trafford & Leshem's paper show (2009, p.305), the word 'original' is often placed at the heart of debates about what is and what is not doctoral:

*Doctoral candidates are expected to make 'an original contribution to knowledge'. It is the role of examiners to assess if this has been achieved. (Emphasis in original)*

This is not the place to go into great detail in the areas of lexical semantics, vagueness or fuzzy logic. Nevertheless all these have something to contribute to an argument stating that the terms 'originality' and 'original' are highly unlikely to be understood in the same way across groups of EdD academics.

Three points should, in my view, be made. Firstly, the English words 'original' and 'originality' are polysemous; that is, they have two or more semantically related but different senses. Any work of art can be said to be an original if it is not directly copied, even though the artist may have been strongly influenced by the work of others. Alternatively, a critic may say of a work that it is original (perhaps prefaced by adverbs such as 'absolutely' or 'stunningly') with the intended sense that it is unlike anything ever produced before. These two senses can be seen as operating on a cline, as illustrated below:

*Not copied* <----->*Groundbreaking*

**Figure 1: The 'originality' cline**

We should note in passing that lexical semantics has long maintained a distinction between homonymy (in which a single word of identical spoken/written form has two or more unrelated meanings) and polysemy as briefly defined above (see, for instance, Cruse 1986). An example of homonymy would be 'tip' (piece of practical advice) versus 'tip' (end of the nose or finger). The words 'original' or 'originality' are, by contrast, polysemous.

The second point to be noted is that the Sorites Paradox is relevant here. Although apparently first raised by Eubulides of Miletus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, examples of the Sorites Paradox are



often discussed in papers by contemporary philosophers and logicians (see, for instance, Tye 1994, Bittner 2011). The subject often arises because of the interest of semanticists in vagueness (Channell 1994) and of logicians in fuzzy logic (Hájek & Novák 2003). The essence of the Sorites Paradox can be conveyed through many examples (hirsute versus bald-headed men, non-heaps versus heaps of sand, and so on). Here I shall use the example of observed aging in a third person:

1. *Today Nora is not old.*
2. *Adding one day to Nora's age will not make her old.*
3. *Therefore adding a further day to Nora's age will not make her old.*
4. *Therefore adding N days to Nora's age will not make her old*
5. *Yet one day Nora will be old.*

The paradox lies in the apparent fact that the transition between state X and state Y (youth to age; hairiness to baldness) must, logically, occur at some specifiable point, yet it appears to be impossible to isolate that point. This insight could be applied to the 'doctoral quality' or 'doctorateness' of a thesis or candidate<sup>7</sup>. Note that Trafford and Leshem (2009, p.315) conceive of doctorateness as a "threshold", with candidates "approaching and passing through" but they also refer (op. cit., p.312) to "a liminal state" in which the individual seems "unable to pass through a particular threshold to a new, desired and necessary conceptual understanding." Seen in these terms, decisions about 'originality', whether or not a 'contribution' has been made, and whether or not a doctorate should be awarded, are highly complex and contentious. A candidate or a thesis may oscillate between displaying doctoral performance and not doing so.

The above discussion (and the footnote below) may seem too philosophical in nature, too rarified, too far removed from the practical issue (for examiners) of deciding what is original or doctoral and what is not. Let us, therefore, re-examine the data obtained when respondents rated questionnaire item 31 ("EdD examiners should think in terms of a clear-cut distinction: either an

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<sup>7</sup> The notion of the Sorites Paradox is also relevant to the required length (in words) of a doctoral thesis. Suppose that an EdD thesis judged to be outstanding by the examiners was reduced (by the writer) by one word. Its excellence would probably remain, in the eyes of the same judges. A similar reaction might be expected with two or three words. However, if the writer continued to prune, eventually the examiners might feel that the thesis was damaged and no longer deserving of a pass at doctoral level. So how many words are needed for an EdD thesis writer to demonstrate doctoral quality?

EdD thesis is original or it is not”). What we find is an almost perfect symmetry: 5 strongly agree; 6 agree; 6 NAND; 6 disagree; 4 strongly disagree. The sample is small (27), but I would argue that such a response raises the possibility that the polysemy or semantic vagueness of ‘original’ or ‘originality’ in relation to doctoral assessment may genuinely exert an influence on the decisions made by EdD academics when acting as EdD examiners.

This issue may be worthy of further research with greater numbers of subjects. For instance, some respondents to a recent QAA survey (n.d.) suggested that “staff training on the interpretation of ‘originality’, especially for those examining a doctoral degree for the first time” might be advisable.

### *5.3.3 Scoring procedures based on a model of ‘doctorateness’*


Full realization of the vagueness or fuzziness of the boundaries around such notions as ‘doctorateness’ and ‘originality’ or ‘original contribution’ leads one to wonder whether some form of scoring or grading system could play a useful role in making examiners’ decisions more “transparent” (Park 2003, p.1) to candidates and other stakeholders. While the borderline between the original and the unoriginal may be indistinct, that between, say, the integers 50 and 49 is not. We have seen already that Cowen (1997, p.197) implies that a doctorate should be seen as an entry level qualification for certain jobs, not a pinnacle:

*“The search for the demonstration of brilliance...moves elsewhere – to the post-doctoral or to the assistant professor phase of a career, as in the United States, and is judged by publication rather than PhD.”*

Fifteen years after Cowen wrote those words it may be still more tempting to accept what they convey. From the 1970s to the 1990s four of the most well-known British scholars in applied linguistics were Professor Chris Brumfit (Southampton); Professor Chris Candlin (Lancaster, then Macquarie); Professor John Sinclair (Birmingham) and Professor David Wilkins (Reading). None of these high-profile academics had a doctorate, something which today would be unthinkable. According to a report (HEFCE 2011), in the 1996-97 academic year approximately 14,000 people were studying for a PhD; by 2009-2010 the figure was almost 23,000. Today, in 2012, one can find UK job advertisements for research assistants or research associates for which a PhD is required and a salary of £27,000 per annum is offered. As Collins (2011, p.229) puts it:

*The process of credential inflation is largely self-driven; it feeds on itself. A given level of education at one time gave access to elite jobs. As educational attainment has expanded, the social distinctiveness of that degree and its value on the occupational marketplace has declined; this in turn has expanded demand for still higher levels of education. This is the main dynamic, although other factors have played into it.*

It is at least possible that, in order to allow some of those with doctorates to steal a march on others competing with them for jobs, Britain will eventually need to follow longstanding practice in various continental European countries and put in place a post-doctoral qualification like the ‘habilitation’. Another alternative allowing greater differentiation in the jobs market of those holding doctorates would be to classify doctoral passes, perhaps in a similar way to first degrees (first class, second class, third class). Doing that might require a numerical system of marking or grading. It might also require an agreed model of doctorateness, such as that provided by the QAA or by Trafford & Leshem (2009, p.309):

<b>Contribution to knowledge</b>	<b>Stated gap in knowledge</b>	<b>Explicit research questions</b>	<b>Conceptual framework</b>
<b>Conceptual conclusions</b>			<b>Explicit research design</b>
<b>Research questions answered</b>			<b>Appropriate methodology</b>
<b>Cogent argument throughout</b>	<b>Full engagement with theory</b>	<b>Clear / precise presentation</b>	<b>‘Correct’ data collection</b>

**Table X: Components of doctorateness (Trafford & Leshem 2009, p.309)**

In the Trafford & Leshem model, synergy is important. The authors argue (op. cit., p.308) that “doctorateness is a jigsaw puzzle that can only be fully appreciated when all the components are present and fitted together...the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts.” It is also noticeable, if we observe its component parts closely, that the model appears to emphasise characteristics of the thesis, rather than the candidate.

If a model like this could be agreed between academics nationally in a given discipline area, such as Education, or in a ‘cluster’, such as social sciences, it could form a basis for scoring on scales

for each element of the model and, in turn, using these (weighted as necessary) to derive an overall score and a degree classification. If the scores were revealed to the candidate, either by the examiners on the day of the viva, or by the supervisor at a later and perhaps less emotional stage, this might reduce the problems of transparency identified by Park (2003, p.3) and provide a stronger basis for appeals, as candidates and appeals committees would be able to see exactly where examiners had discerned strengths and weaknesses. If necessary, therefore, the examiners could be asked to provide justifications of particular scores. Recall that, in the questionnaire data, two respondents strongly agreed and ten agreed that, in their own experience, “some decisions reached by EdD viva examiners could be described as idiosyncratic.” A further seven chose NAND and not a single person strongly disagreed.

Pollitt (1991) provides an engrossing comparison of what he calls ‘counting’ and ‘judging’ procedures in both sport and language testing. He uses ‘counting’ to cover the way, for example, achievement is measured in a long jump competition or in a multiple choice test: arithmetic is the foundation and little judgement is needed. On the other hand, in assessing a piece of writing or a performance by an ice-skater at the Olympic Games (or, at present, an EdD thesis or a viva voce performance), judgement is paramount. As Pollitt observes (op. cit., p.55), judges at an Olympic ice-skating competition have received rigorous training and the scores they award for each skater at each competition are correlated with those of other judges on the panel to check accuracy and consistency. A system also operates whereby each skater goes out onto the ice with full marks and points are deducted (according to rules clearly understood by the judges, which cover aspects of technical performance such as smooth changes in tempo and edgework) as skaters deviate from the ideal. Could this have any relevance to doctoral assessment? Should Pollitt’s ‘counting’ be assigned a role in the assessment of EdD theses and viva voce examinations, as well as his ‘judging’?

Despite the detailed efforts of various specialists (QAA 2001, Trafford & Leshem 2009), the description of ‘doctorateness’ has not yet been achieved to universal satisfaction. As Denicolo & Park (2010) imply, it remains an “elusive concept”. Based on thought only, I offer the following speculative ideas, purely for discussion:

- *It is difficult to decide on what is doctoral*

- *EdD examiners might find it easier to identify features of theses/candidates (at viva) which are not doctoral*
- *EdD examiners could use analytic scoring scales (one for each aspect of a model of doctorateness)*
- *They could deduct marks whenever they identified language, thought or textual organisation which was not doctoral*

This mode of thinking (working from a negative perspective rather than a positive one) may seem counter-intuitive, but it can be seen as having some philosophical support. Popper (1963, pp.33-39) famously argued that science proceeds through falsification rather than proof, and he also advocated that politicians should not strive to provide the conditions through which people could be happy (for he did not believe, unlike Layard (2003), that we know how to do that), but to minimize suffering.

*‘Minimize unhappiness’ is not just a negative formulation of the Utilitarian maxim ‘Maximize happiness’. There is a logical asymmetry here: we do not know how to make people happy, but we do know ways of lessening their unhappiness.’* (Magee 1973: p.85)

Given the apparent disparity of views about ‘originality’ and ‘original contribution’ (questionnaire item 31, GT interview questions 3 and 4), it might well be possible to mount a case for further research and consultation regarding issues such as the use of marking scales, the classification of doctorates, and the development of a detailed model of doctorateness (perhaps for the EdD nationally). However, the possibility of what one might call assessment by subtraction and the combined use of ‘counting’ alongside ‘judging’ (à la Pollitt 1991) are raised here purely as intriguing puzzles for further thought.

#### *5.3.4 Desiderata for further research, consultation and planning*

I have persistently referred to the present research as being carried out by a single researcher at a geographical distance from his respondents. I did so for a reason: I believe that issues around the EdD in UK should be fully investigated by research teams who are properly funded, have extensive research expertise, and who either reside in the country or else provide third party ‘detached’ expertise from elsewhere (such as Australia) during an extended period of investigation. The three themes I have identified are the characterisation of differences between the EdD and the PhD in education; the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral viva (in the present study in relation to the EdD, but perhaps in general); and the concept of ‘originality’ and its interpretation and degree of importance for the judgement of EdD theses.

Subjects who responded to the questionnaire and the GT interview generally seem to believe that EdD programmes at universities in England allow graduates to reach an equivalent skills and knowledge endpoint as the PhD in an education area. They also seem to believe that EdD viva candidates should be questioned and assessed exactly as for PhD students. Yet questions continue to be raised about the value and standing of the EdD, often bracketed as a 'professional doctorate' with awards in many other discipline areas, such as health, which aim to recruit mid-career professionals (Burgess et al. 2011). Poultney (2010, p.82) gives her personal view as an EdD programme leader that “the flexibility and impact on professions offered by the EdD is not in any way ‘inferior’ to the PhD programme”, but she also notes “resistance to professional doctorates” and ends by declaring that “the struggle continues”.

Given this apparent “struggle” (between EdD enthusiasts and EdD detractors), perhaps the main issue worthy of further research and discussion is the future of the EdD and its value and purpose as a doctoral programme and award distinct from the PhD in Education. At a time when the PhD seems to be moving slightly away from the “big book thesis” (Dunleavy, 2003) and towards incorporating additional taught courses or activities, designed to broaden both the learning experience and the graduate’s skills, it seems possible that the degree of overlap between the two may slowly increase over time. Although the majority of respondents to questionnaire items 37 and 38 did not seem receptive to the notions that there is no need for two separate doctorates (EdD and PhD in Education), or that all Education doctorates should be PhDs, with the certificate showing the route (by thesis; by thesis plus coursework), there were those who did:

*I tend to think of an EdD as more like a doctorate by thesis and coursework than as a professional qualification. Some EdD students I have supervised and examined have not been very professionally oriented at all, although they have remained more or less in the field of education. An EdD should include original research, whether it is of professional value and use or not.*

This respondent (26) also included the comment that questionnaire item 38 (“All doctorates in education should be PhDs, with certificates showing the route (eg “by thesis”; “by coursework plus thesis”) was “a good idea.” S/he was alone in this, being one of four respondents who chose to ‘agree’ with item 38, while one other respondent chose ‘strongly agree’. We have seen that there is some evidence of mistrust about the EdD both within EdD academics (questionnaire

respondent 2 / GT interviewee W: the EdD “lacks the respectability and credibility of the PhD” and “should now be phased out”) and outside (Taylor 2008). Meanwhile, Harvard University has recently announced that it will phase out its EdD programme (as we have seen, the first in the world – though probably with a slightly different philosophy to EdDs in the UK) and begin to offer a PhD instead (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2012). Could it perhaps, therefore, be worthwhile to instigate a full nationwide debate among EdD academics about the way forward for Education doctorates? The Australian Qualifications Framework (2011, p.63) makes a distinction between the Doctoral Degree (Research) qualification (leading to the award of a Doctor of Philosophy) and the Doctoral Degree (Professional). In the case of the former there is a stipulation that “research in the program of learning will be...typically two-thirds of learning”, while in the second case no such assertion is made. Perhaps universities in the UK could consider a similar distinction and, in the field of Education award PhD in Education (by thesis) where at least two-thirds of the credits (if any) or words written for assessment were associated with the thesis, and PhD (by thesis and coursework) where fewer than two-thirds of the credits (but at least half, for credibility / face validity) were associated with the thesis. Under this proposal the current Bath EdD (with approximately 55% of the words written for assessment in the thesis) would become a PhD in Education by thesis and coursework.

The organization of debates about such topics – across universities in England or the UK offering EdD programmes – would probably best be undertaken by a national body, such as Universities UK, or the UK Council for Graduate Education, or carried out under the auspices of other national or regional bodies (more familiar to UK-resident academics than to me) which fund research into higher education and act as foci for professional/academic conversations. In addition, although universities value their autonomy and the idea of national economic planning smacks somewhat, in the UK context, of the Wilson government in the 1960s and its Department of Economic Affairs, it might be valuable for the government to set up a committee (chaired by an individual with experience in the higher education sector and sufficient weight to command respect in government circles) to produce a white paper on doctoral education and its value to the United Kingdom’s economy, with specific instructions to recommend a viable way forward in relation to professional doctorates, ‘taught PhDs’ and any overlap between them, bearing in mind the exigencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘knowledge economy’ and the globalised competition for skills.

The committee could also take into account international developments, with the EdD currently under pressure in North America; ‘coursework doctorates’ attracting some criticism from inside the higher education sector in Australia; and reports of some suspicion of ‘professional doctorates’ evident among official bodies in other parts of the European Union, including the Republic of Ireland.

The present, limited research suggests that some EdD academics in English universities regard the EdD as a robust, intellectually stimulating programme which is distinct from the PhD but takes the graduate to an equivalent endpoint in terms of knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, even among 27 questionnaire respondents and seven GT interviewees there is evidence of dissent and unease. It might be wise for English (and UK) universities to do two things: to investigate the extent of, and reasons for, any doubts about the EdD among their own EdD academics, and to instigate, or cooperate with, research and debate designed to plot a principled and intellectually coherent way forward for the programme throughout the UK.



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<sup>8</sup> The date given on the QAA website (March 8 2012) for each summary of responses (question by question) is December 1899. It would be safe to regard this as an error.

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## **APPENDICES**

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## **APPENDIX A: QAA FRAMEWORK FOR H.E. QUALIFICATIONS: D LEVEL**

*Descriptor for qualifications at Doctoral (D) level: Doctoral degree*

***Doctorates are awarded to students who have demonstrated:***

*i the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;*

*ii a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;*

*iii the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;*

*iv a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.*

***Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:***

*a make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;*

*b continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;*

***and will have:***

*c the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.*

Source: QAA Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2008)

## APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

### INTRODUCTION

This questionnaire concerns the specific nature of the Doctorate in Education (EdD). Data collected will contribute to the completion of my own EdD thesis (University of Bath). Please rate as many of the statements in this questionnaire as you are able to, and then email it to me, if possible by May 7 2010, at the address given.

Most of the items in this questionnaire are based on assertions made in published papers, although a few probe areas which do not appear to be much addressed in relevant scholarly literature. Please react to each item by underlining or **bolding** which of the following best sums up your reaction:

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

Your responses will be anonymous, and no information will be revealed in my thesis or elsewhere about you or the university at which you work. In other words, you should feel free to respond to this questionnaire honestly and in a personal, not 'official', way.

Questionnaires can be infuriating – for instance the items in them sometimes contain assumptions one disagrees with, or the language is ambiguous, or the questionnaire as a whole simply doesn't mention issues which one feels to be important. **If any of these things happens – or you have other reactions which cannot be conveyed except through verbal explanation – please make use of the spaces at the end of each section to record your reactions.**

If you would like to receive notification when the results of this questionnaire are available, please enter an 'x' in the box below:

☐

Many thanks for your participation!

Brian Poole [brianqpoole@gmail.com](mailto:brianqpoole@gmail.com)

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

1. The PhD represents the gold standard and other forms of doctorate are slightly inferior.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

2. The more taught/assessed modules a doctorate contains, the more it departs from the doctoral 'gold standard'.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

3. "Thesis-only" doctorates tend to have greater prestige than those which include taught and assessed courses.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

4. The PhD tends to have greater prestige than doctorates which have appeared in recent decades (eg EdD, DBA).

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

5. EdD programmes should be designed so as to be of direct relevance to professional practices in education.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

6. EdD programmes should aim to embed research into the practices of professional educators.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

7. EdD coursework assignments should be marked based on criteria relating closely to professional knowledge.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

8. In assessing an EdD thesis examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

If you have comments on items 1 to 8, or related issues, please write them below:

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

9. The EdD viva voce examination is vital because the candidate's understanding of his/her work must be checked.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

10. The EdD viva voce examination is useful because it gives examiners a chance to provide guidance and advice.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

11. The EdD viva voce examination should be seen as an essential rite of passage for candidates.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

12. The EdD viva voce examination is an important means of maintaining academic standards.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

13. The viva voce examination is a more appropriate form of assessment for the PhD than for the EdD.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

14. EdD examiners should have the *option* of calling for a viva voce examination; it need not be compulsory.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

15. Personality factors (such as shyness) can unfairly affect the outcome of an EdD viva.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

16. Cultural factors (such as disinclination to challenge authority figures) can unfairly affect an EdD viva's outcome.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

17. Non-native speakers of English may perform below potential in an EdD viva examination.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

18. EdD viva examiners take such factors (personality/cultural/linguistic) into account when assessing performance.

SA   A   NAND   D   SD

If you have any additional comments in reaction to items 9 to 18 please write them below:



## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

It is sometimes argued that some or all doctoral vivas should be video-taped or audio-taped. Please react to this proposal through the items 19 to 22 below:

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

19. Recording of viva proceedings would be an affront to the competence and professionalism of examiners.

SA    A        NAND   D        SD

20. Recording of viva proceedings would provide a basis for judging the merits of any student appeals.

SA    A        NAND   D        SD

21. Recording of viva proceedings would provide a useful resource for guiding/training new EdD examiners.

SA    A        NAND   D        SD

22. Recording of viva proceedings would facilitate oversight of the fairness of EdD vivas.

SA    A        NAND   D        SD

Do you have other comments about the possibility of video-taping or audio-taping EdD vivas? If so, please use the space below:

It can be argued that whereas at PhD viva voce examinations, the whole of the candidate's work (the PhD thesis) is considered, at many EdD viva voce examinations only part of the candidate's work is addressed (since coursework assignments may not be considered). Please rate statement 23:

23. If they take place, EdD viva voce exams should consider both the thesis and coursework assignments.

SA    A        NAND   D        SD

If you have any other comments about item 23, please use the space below:

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

24. In my experience some decisions reached by EdD viva examiners could be described as idiosyncratic.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

25. Variability in viva examiner judgments is the greatest weakness in the EdD assessment process.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

26. EdD viva examiners do not generally receive formal training.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

27. EdD viva examiners should question candidates exactly as they would a PhD candidate.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

28. EdD examiners should assess the viva performance of EdD candidates exactly as for PhD candidates.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

If you have any comments regarding items 24 to 28 above, please record them in the space below:

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

29. It is difficult to interpret what the term 'originality' should mean in the context of an EdD thesis.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

30. One should expect less 'originality' in an EdD thesis than in a PhD thesis because of the latter's greater length.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

31. EdD examiners should think in terms of a clear-cut distinction: either an EdD thesis is original or it is not.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

32. EdD examiners should focus mainly on the 'publishable quality' of an EdD thesis, rather than on its 'originality'.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

33. Examiners should regard an EdD thesis as 'of publishable quality' if they can identify substantial parts of it which could be adapted into a journal paper or papers.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

If you have further comments on issues raised in items 29 to 33 above, please note them here:

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neither agree nor disagree (NAND)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

34. Compared to the PhD, the EdD has a weaker claim to be called a “research doctorate”.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

35. Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more ‘applied’ and less ‘theoretical’.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

36. The EdD provides a different route to the same endpoint as a PhD on an education-related topic.

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

37. Thinking of doctorates in the field of education, there is no need to have two different awards (PhD and EdD).

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

38. All doctorates in education should be PhDs, with certificates showing the route (eg “by thesis”; “by coursework plus thesis”)

SA    A    NAND    D    SD

If you have further comments on issues raised in items 34 to 38 above, please note them here:

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISING THE EdD

Please answer questions 39 to 41 by underlining or **bolding** 'yes' or 'no'.

39. Are you, or have you ever been, an EdD programme leader (or equivalent title)?

Yes                      No

40. Do you have experience of acting as an external examiner for EdD viva voce examinations?

Yes                      No

41. Do you have experience of acting as an internal examiner for EdD viva voce examinations?

Yes                      No

Please answer question 42 by underlining or **bolding** the most appropriate answer.

42. How many years in total have you been teaching on EdD programmes?

Less than 1 year

1 to 4 years

5 to 9 years

10 years or above

43. What is *your own* highest degree? (Please underline or **bold** the appropriate item)

PhD

DPhil

EdD

Other (please specify):

**Please save your responses and send them to [brianqpoole@gmail.com](mailto:brianqpoole@gmail.com) Thanks once again.**

## APPENDIX C: UNIVERSITIES TO WHICH A QUESTIONNAIRE WAS SENT

University
*Bath
Birmingham
*Brighton
Bristol
Brunel
Canterbury Christ Church
Chester
Coventry
Derby
*Durham
*East Anglia
East London
*Exeter
Gloucester
*Greenwich
Hertfordshire
*Hull
Institute of Education, University of London
Keele
*King's College, University of London
Kingston
*Leeds
Leeds Metropolitan
*Leicester
*Lincoln
*Liverpool Hope
London Metropolitan University
Manchester
Manchester Metropolitan
Newcastle
Nottingham
Open University
Plymouth
Reading
*Roehampton
*Sheffield
*Sheffield Hallam
Southampton
*South Bank
Sussex
Warwick
West of England

\*At least one academic returned a completed questionnaire

## APPENDIX D: SUMMARY INFORMATION ON QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMANTS

Informant Number	University Number <sup>9</sup>	Experience as EdD Programme Leader?	Experience as External Examiner	Experience as Internal Examiner	Years of Experience as an EdD Lecturer	Highest Qualification
1	8	Yes	Yes	No	1 to 4	PhD
2	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
3	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
4	6	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 to 9	PhD
5	21	Yes	No	No	1 to 4	EdD
6	32	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
7	27	Yes	No	No	5 to 9	PhD
8	17	Yes	No	Yes	10 plus	PhD
9	17	No	Yes	Yes	10 plus	EdD
10	17	No	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
11	22	Yes	No	Yes	1 to 4	EdD
12	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
13	22	Yes	No	Yes	5 to 9	PhD
14	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
15	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
16	24	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
17	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 to 9	EdD
18	16	Yes	No	Yes	5 to 9	PhD
19	16	Yes	No	Yes	10 plus	MPhil
20	11	Yes	Yes	Yes	10 plus	PhD
21	12	No	No	No	1 to 4	EdD
22	12	No	Yes	No	Less than 1 year	EdD
23	10	Yes	No	Yes	10 plus	PhD
24	29	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 to 9	PhD
25	34	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 to 9	PhD
26	22	No	Yes	Yes	5 to 9	PhD
27	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 to 9	PhD

<sup>9</sup> The numbers 1 to 42 were randomly assigned to the universities offering EdD programmes. The key to these university numbers is known only to the present writer.

## APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE DATA (LIKERT SCALE ITEMS)

**Key: S1 onwards:** numbered subjects/informants (horizontal axis); **MO** = mode; **ME** = mean (horizontal axis); **SD** = standard deviation (horizontal axis); **1-38** Questionnaire items (vertical axis); Responses: **5 = SA, 4 = A, 3 = NAND, 2 = D, 1 = SD** (4.5 indicates both 5 and 4 selected); **x** = no response or unintelligible response

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20	S21	S22	S23	S24	S25	S26	S27	MO	ME	SD
1	2	x	4	1	1	3	4	2	4	4	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	2	2	4	4	4.5	1	2.33	1.32
2	4	5	4	2	1	4	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	4	5	2	2.3	1.32
3	4	4	4	2	1	4	3	2	4	4	2	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	4	2	1	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	3.26	1.10
4	4	4	4	4	1	3	5	3	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	3.7	0.95
5	4	5	5	4	5	3	4	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	3	4	4	3.81	0.83
6	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	3	5	3	3	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	3	5	4	4.11	0.70
7	3	2	4	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	2	3	2.59	0.69
8	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	4	1	2	3	3	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	2	2,3	2.67	0.88
9	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	1	2	5	2	5	5	5	4.41	1.08
10	4	4	3	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	3	5	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	1	5	4	4	4	5	4	3.89	0.93
11	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	5	5	2	5	1	3	5	4	4	5	5	4.11	1.05
12	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	2	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	4.41	0.75
13	2	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1.67	0.73
14	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	4	3	1	2	1	1	2	1	5	3	1	2	2	1	1	1.81	1.00
15	4	3	3	3	2	3	4	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	2	4	3	5	4	2	2	2	3	3	3.00	0.88
16	4	3	3	2	4	4	1	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	2	4	2	5	3	2	2	3	3	3	3.04	0.94
17	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	2	2	3	1	2	x	3	4	3	3	3	2	4	2	5	3	4	4	3	5	¾	3.23	0.99
18	4	x	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	4	5	4	1	x	2	5	5	4	3	4	3.60	0.96
19	2	1	4	2	2	3	3	2	2	4	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	3	5	2	1	1	3	5	4	2	5	2	2.63	1.24
20	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	2	3	4	5	5	4	4	2	3	2	2	3	5	4	1	2	4	4	4	3.44	1.09
21	4	5	3	4	4	4	2	2	4	2	4	4	5	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	2	4	4	1	4	3.59	1.05
22	4	5	3	4	2	4	4	2	4	2	3	2	5	4	4	4	2	3	3	2	5	5	4	1	2	4	1	4	3.26	1.23
23	2	5	3	2	4	4	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	2	3	2	4	3	1	2	4	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2.37	1.11
24	2	5	4	3	2	3	4	2	2	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	4	5	3	4	4	2	2	4	3.22	0.97
25	4	4	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	2	2.52	0.89
26	4	x	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	1	4	3	2	4	2	5	1	4	2	3	1	4	3.23	1.14
27	4	4	5	2	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	5	5	4	2	5	5	4	4.00	0.92
28	4	5	5	2	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4.07	0.78



	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20	S21	S22	S23	S24	S25	S26	S27	MO	ME	SD
29	2	1	3	2	2	5	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	1	4	2	1	2	1	5	2	2	4	3	1	2	2.22	1.15
30	2	1	3	1	2	3	2	2	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	1.78	0.80
31	4	5	3	4	2	3	1	4	3	3	4	2	1	4	4	3	2	5	5	2	5	1	2	2	1	3	5	2,3,4	3.07	1.36
32	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	4	3	2	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	4	4	2	2	2.22	0.89
33	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	1	4	4	5	4	3.89	0.85
34	2	4	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	2	4	1	4	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	4	4	2	2.37	1.01
35	4	5	3	2	1	4	3	2	2	4	4	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	4	4	1	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	3.07	1.15
36	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	5	4	3	4	2	5	x	4	5	3	5	5	4	2	4	2	4	4	3.73	0.96
37	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	4	1	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	3	2	5	1	4	1	1	2	1	2	2.26	1.13
38	2	5	3	2	1	3	1	2	4	3	1	3	3	2	4	1	2	2	1	2	5	1	4	1	1	4	1	1	2.37	1.31

## APPENDIX F: SUMMARY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA BY ITEM

Item No.	Total SA (5)	Total A (4)	Total NAND (3)	Total D (2)	Total SD (1)	Majority	Comments
1	1 (4.5)	7	2	6	10	16/26 (61.54%) D + SD	Respondent 27 answered 4.5.
2	2	5	1	10	9	19/27 (70.37%) D + SD	
3	1	15	3	6	2	16/27 (59.26%) A + SA	
4	3	17	5	0	2	20/27 (74.07%) A + SA	
5	5	14	6	2	0	19/27 (70.37%) A + SA	
6	7	15	5	0	0	22/27 (81.48%) A + SA	Zero D or SD.
7	0	1	16	8	2	16/27 (59.26%) NAND	Very high NAND rate. 10 D + SD <i>versus</i> 1 A + SA.
8	0	5	10	10	2	12/27 (44.44%) D + SD	No absolute majority. High NAND rate.
9	17	7	0	2	1	24/27 (88.89%) A + SA	
10	6	15	4	1	1	21/27 (77.78%) A + SA	
11	12	9	4	1	1	21/27 (77.78%) A + SA	
12	14	11	1	1	0	25/27 (92.59%) A + SA	
13	0	0	4	10	13	23/27 (85.19%) D + SD	Zero A or SA.
14	1	1	2	11	12	23/27 (85.19%) D + SD	
15	1	7	10	9	0	10/27 (37.04%) NAND	Items 15-18 were disregarded (see p.60)
16	1	8	10	7	1	10/27 (37.04%) NAND	Items 15-18 were disregarded (see p.60)
17	1	10 (one 3.5)	9	5	1	11/26 (42.31%) A + SA	Items 15-18 were disregarded (see p.60)
18	3	13	6	2	1	16/25 (64.00%) A + SA	Items 15-18 were disregarded (see p.60)
19	3	3	7	9	5	14/27 (51.85%) D + SD	
20	4	11	6	5	1	15/27 (55.56%) A + SA	

Item No.	Total SA (5)	Total A (4)	Total NAND (3)	Total D (2)	Total SD (1)	Majority	Comments
21	3	17	1	5	1	20/27 (74.07%) A + SA	
22	4	10	4	7	2	14/27 (51.85%) A + SA	
23	1	4	5	11	6	17/27 (62.96%) D + SD	
24	2	10	7	8	0	12/27 (44.44%) A + SA	No absolute majority.
25	0	5	6	14	2	16/27 (59.26%) D + SD	
26	1	14	4	4	3	15/26 (57.69%) A + SA	
27	8	14	2	3	0	22/27 (81.48%) A + SA	
28	9	15	1	2	0	24/27 (88.89%) A + SA	
29	2	2	3	13	7	20/27 (74.07%) D + SD	
30	0	1	3	12	11	23/27 (85.19%) D + SD	
31	5	6	6	6	4	11/27 (40.74%) A + SA	No absolute majority. 10/27 D + SD.
32	0	3	5	14	5	19/27 (70.37%) D + SD	
33	4	19	2	1	1	23/27 (85.19%) A + SA	
34	0	6	2	15	4	19/27 (70.37%) D + SD	
35	2	10	5	8	2	12/27 (44.44%) A + SA	No absolute majority. 10/27 D + SD.
36	5	13	4	4	0	18/26 (69.23%) A + SA	
37	1	4	3	12	7	19/27 (70.37%) D + SD	
38	2	4	5	7	9	16/27 (59.26%) D + SD	

## APPENDIX G: 'FREE' INFORMANT COMMENTS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please note the following:

A number in brackets before a comment indicates the informant/subject number.

A word or phrase in brackets after a comment on a specific questionnaire item indicates how the informant/subject rated that item ('strongly agree' ; 'strongly disagree' etc).

### Comments in covering email messages accompanying the questionnaire

(3) *Good luck!*

(11) *I found your questions really interesting. I wish you luck with your research. I hope you enjoy it and I very much look forward to finding out more about your research when it is completed. Your research is very important.*

Comments specific to item 1: “The PhD represents the gold standard and other forms of doctorate are slightly inferior.”

Comments specific to item 2: “The more taught/assessed modules a doctorate contains, the more it departs from the doctoral ‘gold standard’.”

Comments specific to item 3: ““Thesis-only” doctorates tend to have greater prestige than those which include taught and assessed courses.”

(11) *It is not clear if this is my perception you are looking for, or that of the field.* (disagree)

(14) *I think this is true in some (but not all) quarters, though it isn't my personal view.* (agree)

Comments specific to item 4: “The PhD tends to have greater prestige than doctorates which have appeared in recent decades (eg EdD, DBA).”

(14) *I think this is true in some (but not all) quarters, though it isn't my personal view.* (agree)

Comments specific to item 5: “EdD programmes should be designed so as to be of direct relevance to professional practices in education.”

(27) *Although what you mean by ‘professional practices’ depends on the level and type of education. Besides, “there is nothing more practical than a good theory” (Lewin, 1952: 169).* (agree)

Comments specific to item 6: “EdD programmes should aim to embed research into the practices of professional educators.”

(14) *I believe the EdD should facilitate this, but that it's for the individual student to do the embedding.* (NAND)

Comments specific to item 7: “EdD coursework assignments should be marked based on criteria relating closely to professional knowledge.”

(11) *I would need a working definition of professional knowledge.* (NAND)

(27) *A doctorate requires a critical distance that places the researcher outside of the realm of their regular professional knowledge.* (disagree)

Comments specific to item 8: “In assessing an EdD thesis examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge.”

(1) *Examiners should use the same criteria as for a PhD with the addition of advanced professional knowledge.* (agree)

(11) *My understanding is that the EdD should conform to QAA doctoral criteria.* (disagree)

(12) *Depends on how you define ‘advanced professional knowledge’ – I would include theoretical knowledge in such a phrase but I know others would think in more practice based terms – hence my sitting on the fence response.* (NAND)

(27) *The ‘professional knowledge’ of a primary school teacher is hugely different from that of a senior lecturer.* (disagree)

General comments entered after items 1 to 8

(4) *It is not clear how ‘professional knowledge’ is being understood in the questions. The discussion of this is an important element of EdD courses.*

(5) *I find the description of EdD modules as ‘taught’ and ‘assessed’ as limiting and restrictive. I view the components or modules as research reports, all of which contribute knowledge, supported by the fact that most EdD programmes are validated at doctoral level. For question 8, examiners look for evidence of both advanced professional knowledge and contributions to specific fields of education.*

(7) *If you are comparing EdD (and other professional doctorates) to PhDs in the UK, then many of the characterizations above would apply. However, PhDs in some parts of the world, like the US, are done with a combination of taught coursework and research based theses. So, the questions above are not really global as such. I also think that PhDs and Prof Doctorates ought to have equal rigour. However, they are not always seen as representing equal standards. So, that’s where the sense of prestige might originate from.*

(12) *I have distinguished between those questions that appear to want my opinion (e.g. 1&2) and those that seem to ask about how I think others perceive things (e.g. 3 and 4)*

(17) *Very interesting questions. Look forward to compilation of results. A little background to frame my replies: I am American-trained EdD and received that degree in the first EdD*

*programme to be established, Harvard Grad School of Ed. Harvard only awards EdD in its School of Education, no PhD. However, there is a strong academic research track which is taken as PhD (which I followed) and, now, a strong professional-doctorate track, exclusively designated for educational leaders who intend to continue as practitioners. I think the important point here is for a programme to be clear about its identity and strengths, which will then enable students to clarify their professional identity in initial orientation to the programme and in what they take away from it.*

*(18) NAND comments – it's complex. So, a bit of 'yes' and a bit of 'no' is tied up in these responses. For example, yes, there should be evidence of advanced professional knowledge (8) but there should also be evidence of theoretical understanding and the link between theory and practice, as well as original findings emerging from the data which may go beyond current knowledge. Yes, (1) the PhD is seen to be the gold standard and in some ways it is, still, but I also think the EdD is perfectly valid and is gradually gaining increasing respect for itself, so that gold standard concept is very gradually being diluted, even though it is still there. So my response is not quite agree and not quite disagree: somewhere in the middle, because I think that is the state of play at the moment.*

*(19) In assessing EdD coursework or assignments it is important to adhere to QAA doctoral level descriptors – Level 8.*

*(22) I have 'agreed' with points 3 and 4 - not because I agree but from my understanding of others' perceptions. Personally I utterly disagree, but in the main many academics and professionals are yet to understand the equity between EdD and PhD. In some cases I would hold the professional Doctorate in higher esteem than the traditional PhD, simply as a direct result of the impact on professional practice, so long as the academic rigor is maintained.*

*(23) Qs 5 & 7 & 8 – Not everyone who undertakes an Ed.D does so to improve their professional practice – in my experience they are more keen on gaining critical and research perspective, even look forward to a chance to engage in philosophical debates about educational issues, so there needs to be more room for indulge in these desires.*

*(26) My impression is that most academic employers are looking for staff with proven research expertise so that they boost the institution's research status and supervise other doctoral students. An 80,000 word doctorate can demonstrate that. On the other hand I am also aware that US doctorates come with a transcript that demonstrates that the person has done advanced level research methods and content courses, which can make them more eligible for academic employment than a thesis –only doctorate. From the students' point of view an EdD can be seen as an easier route to the doctorate that are expected to have to be employed (for example in Taiwan) or get tenure, and the quality of the writer as a researcher is not so much in consideration. So it is difficult to give a single response to these questions.*

*(27) Nowadays there are more doctorates around than ever before, so they have probably lost some of their prestige. But, still, people are more impressed if you say you have a PhD. They may not have heard of other kinds.*

Comments specific to item 9: “The EdD viva voce examination is vital because the candidate’s understanding of his/her work must be checked.”

Comments specific to item 10: “The EdD viva voce examination is useful because it gives examiners a chance to provide guidance and advice.”

*(23) The viva should be a chance for a collegial discussion and defence of the thesis. However some examiners take authoritarian positions (especially some from the field of health) and treat the viva as an examination rather than a chance for discussion, debate and advice. But this is not particular to the Ed.D alone. (strongly disagree)*

Comments specific to item 11: “The EdD viva voce examination should be seen as an essential rite of passage for candidates.”

Comments specific to item 12: “The EdD viva voce examination is an important means of maintaining academic standards.”

Comments specific to item 13: “The viva voce examination is a more appropriate form of assessment for the PhD than for the EdD.”

*(27) We should aim to maintain the same standards for all types of doctoral degree, regardless of how the different types are perceived. A doctorate should be a doctorate. Maintaining standards implies the use of comparable procedures. (strongly disagree)*

Comments specific to item 14: “EdD examiners should have the *option* of calling for a viva voce examination; it need not be compulsory.”

Comments specific to item 15: “Personality factors (such as shyness) can unfairly affect the outcome of an EdD viva.”

*(14) This shouldn’t happen, since examiners should (and generally do) do their best to put the student at his/her ease and get beyond the ‘personality factor’ in establishing whether the student understands and can defend their thesis. It would be rash to claim, though, that this can’t happen. (agree)*

*(27) So what? The same applies to all professional rites of passage. If you can’t stand the heat... (NAND)*

Comments specific to item 16: “Cultural factors (such as disinclination to challenge authority figures) can unfairly affect an EdD viva’s outcome.”

*(14) If a student is not able to defend their thesis in the face of questioning, this would affect the outcome of a viva – but the student from a different cultural background shouldn’t reach the viva stage without supervisor and others having alerted them to this issue and done their best to prepare them for what’s required. (agree)*

(23) *I'm not sure disinclination to challenge authority figures is always a cultural factor (is also a personality factor) but I do think this could affect the viva's outcome - where the candidate is either not expecting the examiners to give them a grilling or feel they are not being listened to when they offer a defence.* (NAND)

(27) *So go and do your doctorate in Taiwan (or wherever people are supposed to prefer high power distance). But, then, don't expect people to value your doctorate as highly as a British one.* (NAND)

Comments specific to item 17: "Non-native speakers of English may perform below potential in an EdD viva examination."

(11) *I do believe that there is a minimum level of English that is required to gain a doctorate in the medium of English.* (agree)

(14) *There is no reason why this should happen. Students have to have a minimum level of English to be accepted on to the programme, and will have already written in English all assignments and thesis. Examiners should not be making judgements about the candidate's capability based on whether their spoken English is native speaker level.* (NAND)

(23) *I have not encountered any non-native Ed.D candidates, so can't say but the Ph.Ds face the same issue – not sure that they perform below potential because of the language issues though.* (NAND)

(27) *So, ask to be viva'd in your native language. Anyway, this is related to much broader issues of language and power, of which doctoral studies constitute only a tiny part.* (strongly agree)

Comments specific to item 18: "EdD viva examiners take such factors (personality/cultural/linguistic) into account when assessing performance."

(1) *Examiners should be warned by supervisors.* (agree)

(14) *Depends what this means. They don't allow someone to pass at a lower standard because they're from a different cultural/linguistic background or because they're shy, but they should/will do their best to get beyond the superficial impression caused by language/personality/cultural differences in making judgement.* (NAND)

(23) *Not all examiners do. A few are sympathetic to such factors but not all.* (disagree)

(27) *Some do, some don't. Some examiners are insensitive to such factors. Some are very sensitive and tend to over-compensate. And some try to take a balanced but critical view of the viva process.* (NAND)

General comments entered after items 9 to 18



(4) *It would be useful to have the opportunity to respond more discursively to the questions – there are so many assumptions about the role of the viva and cultural factors which I suggest can be better explored through open interviews rather than questionnaires.*

(11) *In response to questions 15, 16 and 18 I would argue it is challenging to make sweeping generalizations without having the evidence base to do so. However, I would argue that being critical and being able to present an argument are important elements of doctoral study.*

(12) *Questions 15 and 16 I found problematic – if they had been worded in a more neutral way (see question 17) I would have agreed. But I do not think they necessarily affect the outcome unfairly although they can be a factor which should be taken into consideration by the examiners (and in my experience mostly are).*

(17) *Difficult to answer some of these questions because they are so context dependent.*

(18) *Believe the EdD viva is absolutely essential and should be maintained.*

(22) *In essence I think the whole manner of moderation requires some thought in order not to discriminate against candidates. For some individuals it could be extremely detrimental (e.g. students with Asperger syndrome) and have no bearing whatsoever on the student's ability or academic standards. In a similar manner to being interviewed for a job, often the viva bears little or no relation to an individual's ability. Personally I quite enjoyed my viva - but am not quite sure if it was a necessary aspect of the process. If the Doctoral process is intended to assist students in defending their work then perhaps the viva is of some use - however, for many taking a professional Doctorate this may not be a useful skill.*

(26) *The viva can also be seen as a kind of reward, as well as a rite of passage, in that two examiners are prepared to give extensive consideration to your work. I have not found it difficult to distinguish between examining the work and the person (shy or not, linguistically inexperienced or not).*

(27) *Your research agenda is a little too obvious to the respondent. There are a lot of leading questions here.*

Comments specific to item 19: “Recording of viva proceedings would be an affront to the competence and professionalism of examiners.”

(27) *A viva is not a police interrogation: they are altogether very different types of genre, and they are performed for very different purposes. Anyway, there are already adequate QA procedures in place. Universities provide staff development for examiners: there are both internal and external examiners; the examiners are selected on the basis of appropriate experience; the external examiner's c.v. is scrutinised by a committee; the supervisor can sit in on the viva to ensure fairness; independent pre-viva reports are written and exchanged by the examiners; the post-viva report is co-written by the examiners; the post-viva report is scrutinised by a committee; etc. And, at the end of the day, the candidate has the right to appeal. (strongly agree)*

Comments specific to item 20: “Recording of viva proceedings would provide a basis for judging

the merits of any student appeals.”

(27) *Yes, but the measures I have described for Q19 are already sufficient. I have experienced first-hand the student appeal process, and I can assure you that it is very rigorous. Anyway, who has time to pore over hours of viva recordings?* (agree)

Comments specific to item 21: “Recording of viva proceedings would provide a useful resource for guiding/training new EdD examiners.”

(14) *This could only be done with care, but could be useful if thought through properly in terms of how the recording is used.* (agree)

(27) *Again, you are confusing genres. A viva is very different from a customer service telephone call. Universities have not yet become utilities companies; not quite. Anyway, the measures already in place for training examiners are entirely adequate.* (strongly disagree)

Comments specific to item 22: “Recording of viva proceedings would facilitate oversight of the fairness of EdD vivas.”

(27) *Actually, I think recording would probably increase the stress level for some candidates. And you’ve already identified this as problematic.* (strongly disagree)

#### General comments entered after items 19 to 22

(1) *Vivas are the equivalent of the public defense (sic) that takes place in many countries. A recording would be equivalent in a way. In my University there is an independent Chair for each viva which helps to take care of fairness.*

(11) *At this stage, other than for staff development purposes I cannot see the point of recording EdD vivas, but I am open to considering arguments to the contrary that I have perhaps not yet thought about.*

(12) *I think it is an issue that is often responded to emotionally rather than rationally in that academic life is to a large part about performance so having vivas recorded should not be that problematic. With appeals on the increase it may be something we need to consider.*

(14) *You haven’t made clear whether the questions relate to audio or video recordings (or either/both). Especially with video recordings, great care would need to be taken that the presence of recording equipment in the room did not have a negative (possibly inhibiting) influence on the student’s performance. Great care would also need to be taken in terms of being absolutely clear what should happen to the recordings: eg keeping them under lock and key and only accessible to certain individuals in certain circumstances; could the student request a copy for his/her own records, could a new member of staff ask to access one to help them prepare for examining, who would determine whether any particular recording was considered (for training purposes) to be an example of good practice; how long should recordings be kept before being destroyed (after the student in question graduates and clearly isn’t going to appeal, or longer-term for training purposes); would an individual internal or external examiner, or student, have*

*the right to refuse to be recorded – in which case could a student argue that they had been denied parity of treatment with other students if their viva wasn't recorded, etc etc etc).*

*(15) Many universities already do this. (In context this appears to mean “video-taping or audio-taping EdD vivas” - quotation from questionnaire text immediately above 15's response).*

*(17) Could be an interesting formative exercise for examiners, supervisor & student, not summative/evaluative. Danger of ‘instant replay’ syndrome.*

*(18) Video and audio are only technologies, not at all exactly the same as the real life face-to-face situation on the viva day during the event itself. Every technological recording of an event is slightly different from the original situation and therefore I would be wary about such recordings being used to judge the merits of student appeals. Mmmm. Maybe if the recordings were technically very advanced this might be considered. It is difficult.*

*The thing is that the viva is an extremely complex business, and things like pauses, intonation, glances, interaction between people, facial expressions, hesitation and physical gestures are likely not to be accurately captured, especially if the camera or microphone is only in one place, which is likely to be the case, given that universities are always underfunded re. technical equipment. The problem with machine-based recordings is that we will start to tend to assume that they must be accurate. I think they might be useful for training (even given the limitations specified above), but I would be really very wary of these facilitating oversight of fairness or being used as the basis for appeals. Not unless you had a whole film crew there for each viva, to record every single detail, with excellent lighting and sound, and a technical crew to test all of that in advance. And even then it would still be an artificial situation which was a ‘production’. I would also be wary of ‘actors/actresses’ playing to the camera, in the form of the chair, the examiners or candidates, which would be bound to distort the proceedings. Overall, I am not too enamoured of this idea except for training. I just think it might lessen the quality – and actually potentially the fairness - of the experience for all concerned. What would happen if one of the people in the room was dark skinned and the lighting was too poor to show their face properly? That's just one small example of the kind of thing that could occur.*

*(22) If the student has no objections then I think it is an excellent idea to record viva exams - in my experience there are far too many examiners who take on the role to justify their own academic work and fail to be as objective as they should in the exam. I also think that the viva experience is vastly diverse for students, often as a direct result of inconsistencies of approach from examiners, which seems inequitable and unfair - maybe better training based on recorded vivas would help reduce this inequality, and sub-standard examiners excluded from the system.*

*(23) This should apply equally to both Ed.Ds and Ph.Ds. I think it may prompt some examiners to conduct themselves more professionally and be more aware of their own role in vivas.*

*(26) Video-taping may be unnecessarily intrusive, but there can be no objection to audio-recording. It may also be copied to the student to avoid the need for note-taking of examiners' comments, and it does offer a way of assessing appeals against ‘unfair’ vivas.*

*(27) The idea of video-taping or audio-taping EdD vivas is a daft idea. Bin it. (Sorry) Flippin' heck, Brian. This is a long questionnaire.*

Comments specific to item 23: “If they take place, EdD viva voce exams should consider both

the thesis and coursework assignments.”

(1) *Only the overview statement that candidates write as part of the portfolio should be considered. You can't have the situation where a piece of work that has passed can be re-examined.* (disagree)

(2) *Only the thesis. Often candidates have moved on tremendously since completing assignments/essays/papers.* (strongly agree – but presumably intended 'strongly disagree')

(5) *It is the case, in the EdD programmes I have been involved in, that the whole of a candidate's EdD portfolio is made available to the examiners at a viva voce and all the work can be referred to, even though the components submitted prior to the thesis have already been examined and passed. It is a legitimate and probably necessary question to ask EdD candidates how their thesis relates to earlier work. The EdD degree is awarded for the totality of an EdD student's work, not just the thesis. In one programme I am aware of, the whole EdD portfolio is bound on completion, in 3 volumes.* (agree)

(7) *Coursework ought to contribute to the writing of the final thesis. If it doesn't then perhaps it is not appropriate for the EdD.* (disagree)

(11) *I think in trying to understand question 23, it is important to try to understand different EdDs assessment. If a piece of work has been graded then it is perhaps not necessary to assess it again. Perhaps the candidate may have moved forward with their thinking. For example elements of a PhD candidates APG might be revisited during the PhD viva because this formed a part of their PhD thesis. Similarly parts of assessed work from an EdD candidate might be revisited during the EdD candidate's viva because it is part of their EdD thesis. It is important to note that some EdDs have different assignments with different topics working up to a thesis proposal. Whereas some EdDs assignments are aimed at moving towards a thesis proposal and therefore may focus on one topic throughout. In my research into the EdD a respondent commented; when is an EdD an EdD? I think this is a very interesting question.* (NAND)

(12) *It could be argued that EdD candidates are at a disadvantage because their work is assessed at a doctoral level much earlier in the process.* (disagree)

(14) *It depends what you mean by 'consider' the coursework assignments. If you mean the examiners should have read the assignments before the viva and question the student in general terms about, eg, how the assignment topics related to their thesis – possibly. If you mean should the student be examined on the assignments in the viva – ie be expected to defend in detail the four sets of 8,000 words, and the examiners have the opportunity to make a judgement about the assignments – then absolutely not. A system that had assignments graded along the way (with grades being confirmed by a Board of Examiners), but then 'reassessed' at a later stage would be unworkable.* (disagree)

(18) *No, I disagree. That would be too complex, and there is detailed assessment of coursework at that stage anyway, including cross-marking, moderation and overseeing by the External Examiner.* (disagree)

(22) *The reason I disagree is simply that it would be unfair to expect an examiner to have all the skills necessary to assess coursework and a thesis. The diversity of coursework for an EdD can be such that while an examiner may have the expertise within their specific field, they may not*

*have expertise to cover all coursework submissions. Perhaps an alternative (for candidates who are 'borderline') the examiners can request viewing prior submissions should they wish to do so. (strongly disagree)*

*(23) Assignments have already been assessed, so not sure this is necessary. However, Ed.Ds could be allowed to use this work in their thesis – which they currently are not allowed to do on some Ed.D courses. (disagree)*

*(26) The assignments have already been assessed and considered by an external examiner. (disagree)*

*(27) The assignments are supposed to be graded at a doctoral level. They are second marked, and a sample are read by external examiners in order to ensure that doctoral standards are maintained. This process is at least as rigorous as the viva. (disagree)*

Comments specific to item 24: “In my experience some decisions reached by EdD viva examiners could be described as idiosyncratic.”

*(5) There is evidence this is no more so than for PHD. (disagree)*

*(11) It is very challenging to standardize the examination of doctoral theses. I do not know how this would be monitored. (disagree)*

*(14) I’m not necessarily commenting on EdD examiners at [names own University] – I’ve also drawn on my experience of other universities’ EdD programmes in answering all these questions.(agree)*

*(23) Some examiners do not believe/want to recognize that all doctoral theses can be idiosyncratic. So rather than their decisions being idiosyncratic (although some could be defined as such), they are sometimes not willing to look outside their own paradigms to recognise doctoral level work. (NAND)*

Comments specific to item 25: “Variability in viva examiner judgments is the greatest weakness in the EdD assessment process.”

*(1) This applies to PhD vivas too. (agree)*

*(5) There is evidence this is no more so than for PHD.(disagree)*

*(11) I have no evidence base to comment on such a statement. (NAND)*

*(14) This question isn’t clear. The fact that variability isn’t the greatest weakness doesn’t mean it isn’t a weakness! (disagree)*

*(23) The same problem exists in Ph.D vivas – to the same extent, I’d say! (NAND)*

Comments specific to item 26: “EdD viva examiners do not generally receive formal training.”

*(5) At my own university, all doctoral examiners must receive and 'pass' formal training. (disagree)*

(8) *If the implication or focus of Q26 is that EdD examiners do not receive training in contrast to PhD examiners then I wouldn't support the question. In my view, there is no essential difference between the PhD examination and the EdD examination in that both are making an assessment of doctorateness. Whilst there may be different sized theses etc the quality should be comparable. The same goes for examiners – many examiners examine PhDs and EdDs and in my experience don't treat them differently – not of an order that makes them different things. Clearly there are differences – say between a PhD and a (more) professional based EdD – but these don't affect the quality or outcome. (agree)*

(11) *I have no evidence base to comment on such a statement. (NAND)*

(23) *The Ed.D examiners I have encountered are all Ph.D examiners as well. In fact, most struggle with the format of the Ed.D thesis being smaller in scope. (strongly disagree)*

(27) *All doctoral examiners attend formal staff development courses provided by the University.(strongly disagree)*

Comments specific to item 27: “EdD viva examiners should question candidates exactly as they would a PhD candidate.”

(5) *For EdD, candidates should be questioned on how the research has advanced their professional role and field, which may or may not be the case for PhD candidates. (disagree)*

(11) *I am unclear regarding the purpose of different EdDs. If the purpose of an EdD is clearly stated as different to the purpose of a PhD in a particular University's regulations then the questions might be different. The question then is should the purpose of the EdD and PhD be different? The other query I have with this statement is whether you are asking about the kinds of question asked, or the approach of questioning taken - one is on substance and the other is a meta-analysis of the questioning process. (agree)*

(27) *A doctorate is / should be a doctorate. (strongly agree).*

Comments specific to item 28: “EdD examiners should assess the viva performance of EdD candidates exactly as for PhD candidates.”

(5) *For EdD, candidates should be questioned on how the research has advanced their professional role and field, which may or may not be the case for PhD candidates. (agree)*

(11) *I am unclear regarding the purpose of different EdDs. If the purpose of an EdD is clearly stated as different to the purpose of a PhD in a particular University's regulations then the questions might be different. The question then is should the purpose of the EdD and PhD be different? The other query I have with this statement is whether you are asking about the kinds of question asked, or the approach of questioning taken - one is on substance and the other is a meta-analysis of the questioning process. (agree)*

(14) *This is an interesting one. Some EdD thesis criteria are identical to those used for the PhD.*

*Others have an additional criterion relating to the professional context. I personally believe the criteria should be the same for both, and that a student should be able to produce a theoretical thesis for the EdD if they wish to do so. (agree)*

*[Incidentally: when the [names own University] EdD was created in [gives year] the notion of a 'professional doctorate' hadn't been invented, and we described the EdD as a modular doctorate. Since then the umbrella term 'professional doctorate' has been visited on all EdDs, bringing with it an implication that there might be a 'professional' element to the content and the assessment. I personally don't feel that this is/should be a major distinguishing factor between PhDs and EdDs: at [own University], for instance, we have often had part-time PhD students undertaking study with a heavy professional focus. To my mind the implication that EdD are somehow 'professional' while PhDs are somehow 'theoretical' is not helpful or meaningful.] (agree)*

*(27) A doctorate is / should be a doctorate. (strongly agree).*

#### General comments entered after items 24 to 28

*(7) The word 'exactly' makes questions 27 & 28 difficult. It seems the scope and to some extent the focus of an EdD will be different from a PhD and that should be expected when examining an EdD. However, the significance, rigour and originality should all be apparent in doctoral level work.*

*(12) I would have given the same answer to questions 24, 25 and 26 if they had been about PhD vivas. My prevarication on questions 27 and 28 are because of the 'exactly' – a PhD thesis is a different animal from an EdD thesis but the process of a verbal examination is the same.*

*(17) In (27) and (28) I have committed myself to an answer within your framing of the issue. With reference to my first comment, however, I think the purpose of the programme should dictate the form of assessment. If the purpose is oriented towards scholarship, then my answers hold. If oriented toward professional practice, then I would answer D for both. (answers are 'agree' for both 27 and 28).*

*(18) Exactly as for PhD in terms of standards of scrutiny, but including within that the issue of professional relevance.*

*(19) Regarding items 27 and 28 examiners should treat the candidate as a doctoral candidate and the rigour required in producing the thesis should be maintained. It may be a shorter thesis but the elements of level 8 within the context of the thesis should be addressed.*

*(22) If there is a viva it should be held in the same manner as for a PhD - as far as I can tell the viva is for exactly the same reason, so there is no reason not to hold them in the same way.*

*(26) The viva examines a doctoral thesis, whether EdD or PhD. Examiners can of course differ in their judgements, just as can journal reviewers and assignment markers. It is part of the academic process.*

Comments specific to item 29: “It is difficult to interpret what the term ‘originality’ should mean in the context of an EdD thesis.”

*(23) The same issue arises in examining Ph.D theses too. (disagree)*

(27) *We read this stuff for a living. We know we somebody is making an original contribution and when they are not. Academics need to be able to identify originality in order to progress in our own careers. We must remain up to date with what's going on in the field. We need to be able to spot gaps in the research literature, so that we can compete for research grants and/or publish articles/books in order to fill those gaps.* (strongly disagree)

Comments specific to item 30: "One should expect less 'originality' in an EdD thesis than in a PhD thesis because of the latter's greater length."

(27) *It's about quality, not quantity.* (strongly disagree)

Comments specific to item 31: "EdD examiners should think in terms of a clear-cut distinction: either an EdD thesis is original or it is not."

(11) *This rather depends on whether the University regulations state that the EdD should make an original contribution to knowledge. My view is that it should, but I am aware this is a contested area. Therefore the regulations should determine the response to the statement. The way such regulations relate to the QAA Doctoral criteria is another debate.* (agree)

Comments specific to item 32: "EdD examiners should focus mainly on the 'publishable quality' of an EdD thesis, rather than on its 'originality'."

(11) *This depends on the University's regulations. The way such regulations relate to the QAA Doctoral Criteria is another debate.* (NAND)

(27) *A thesis is rarely 'publishable' as it stands (unless you publish with somebody dodgy such as VDM Verlag). All decent books and articles have been through a peer review process, in which revisions are required.* (strongly agree)

Comments specific to item 33: "Examiners should regard an EdD thesis as 'of publishable quality' if they can identify substantial parts of it which could be adapted into a journal paper or papers."

(11) *I am unclear what you mean by substantial part. A journal article may be 4500 - 6000 words and an EdD thesis may be 55,000 words if you are considering this to be a substantial part of an EdD then I agree. I would expect to see at least one International Peer Reviewed Journal Article emerging from an EdD thesis - possibly with the supervisor. I think it is very important to publish findings from doctoral research.* (NAND)

(17) *I find myself growing increasingly ill at ease with your questions because they presume so much about particular contexts. I would prefer to answer within the context of our own programme, rather than 'in general', which is how the questions are phrased. I wonder what kinds of conclusions you will draw without taking into consideration respondents' contexts? How valid will these be?*

General comments entered after items 29 to 33



(4) *I suggest that there isn't a comparison between originality and publishable quality – the questions are not easy to answer in this form. Publishable quality could include dissemination to a wider audience beyond research audiences.*

(5) *Indeed, originality may be present in the methodology and/or the means of communicating the findings.*

(10) *It all depends where you are intending to publish.*

(19) *Before getting to the thesis we require all of our students to disseminate their work at least four times – could be conferences, peer-reviewed journals, development seminars, etc. Evidence is required and students are not permitted to proceed to the thesis after the success of their taught assignments unless they provide the evidence of their disseminations. They are used to dissemination prior to the thesis stage.*

(22) *The issues related to originality cover all Doctorates, not just the EdD - and interpretation of originality is problematic across the board.*

(26) *I think originality is a necessary criterion, but it can be interpreted broadly e.g. a replication study in a new context, noting the differences, might be allowed. I have a problem with overseas students whose work may be considered highly original back home, but rather behind the times in the UK.*

(27) *You seem to be operating with a very limited notion of 'doctoral/-ateness'. There is more to it than 'originality' and 'publishability'. Look at the thesis assessment criteria in Appendix 5 of your EdD Research Enquiry Handbook. For example, you make no mention of criticality, which is a key element of any piece of academic work and must be demonstrated to a high degree in a doctoral thesis. Also, you have done a literature search to see how 'doctoral/-ateness' is being defined in publications, conference abstracts, etc?*

Comments specific to item 34: “Compared to the PhD, the EdD has a weaker claim to be called a “research doctorate”.”

Comments specific to item 35: “Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more ‘applied’ and less ‘theoretical’.”

(8) *Q35 – whilst this is ‘understandable’ if the EdD is professionally based it does not automatically follow that the balance of the applied and theoretical aspects are different from a thesis that is more theoretical in its focus but this is a distinction that can apply to any thesis and whether it's a PhD or an EdD is / need not be relevant. (disagree)*

(11) *I think this relates closely to the University's regulations. Education is an applied (art and) science and I would argue that there is a false dichotomy between theory and practice. Therefore I would argue that an PhD in education would potentially have application and be able to demonstrate potential impact/influence for the field. It is interesting to note that there are some PhDs that include a Research Methods taught element and a number of PhDs as I understand it now have taught elements. I think the EdD is distinctive and has something very distinctive to*

*offer to the field and I believe there should be both EdDs and PhDs.*

Comments specific to item 36: “The EdD provides a different route to the same endpoint as a PhD on an education-related topic.”

*(17) Alright, I’ve broken down and answered (36) as I wanted to answer several other questions: Both A and D, which is not an reply you offer. However, my reply would depend on a clear delineation of a particular programme’s purpose.*

*(27) In theory, yes. In practice, I tend to steer the weaker students towards the EdD programme: the kind of students who need a more structured approach and easier steps up. (I’m sure I’m not the only supervisor who does this). Also the MPhil/PhD route implies a bigger risk for staff: you can supervise somebody who struggles for two or three years, then they fail their transfer seminar, and you’ve wasted your investment. Weak EdD students are weeded out earlier, as they fail assignments. (agree)*

Comments specific to item 37: “Thinking of doctorates in the field of education, there is no need to have two different awards (PhD and EdD).”

*(27) The two programmes are structured differently to suit the needs of different types of student. Both varieties need to be exist. (sic) (strongly disagree)*

Comments specific to item 38: “All doctorates in education should be PhDs, with certificates showing the route (eg “by thesis”; “by coursework plus thesis”).”

*(1) That is the way to second class-ness in my view. See them as equal but different routes. (disagree)*

*(4) 38 seems to miss the point about the difference between PhDs and EdDs, which relate to contribution to professional knowledge in practice, not mode of presentation. (disagree)*

*(5) As I have already argued, I do not see EdD components as coursework but as research reports. Although there is typically a common programme that EdD students follow in years one and two there is no course or syllabus for students to produce coursework form as students relate all the input to their own individual professional field, role and developing research topic/s. Logically, all doctorates in education could be titled EdDs. (strongly disagree)*

*(14) I don’t really think the label matters that much, and wouldn’t have a problem what we called the various doctorates – so long as we all (internationally, not just nationally) shared the same terminology and thus understood what the different labels meant. Though there might be virtue in what is suggested here, I suspect we’re too far down the EdD line now to be attempting to unpick what already exists. (disagree)*

*(27) No. Because they are different types of programme. They need to be named differently. (strongly disagree)*

General comments entered after items 34 to 38

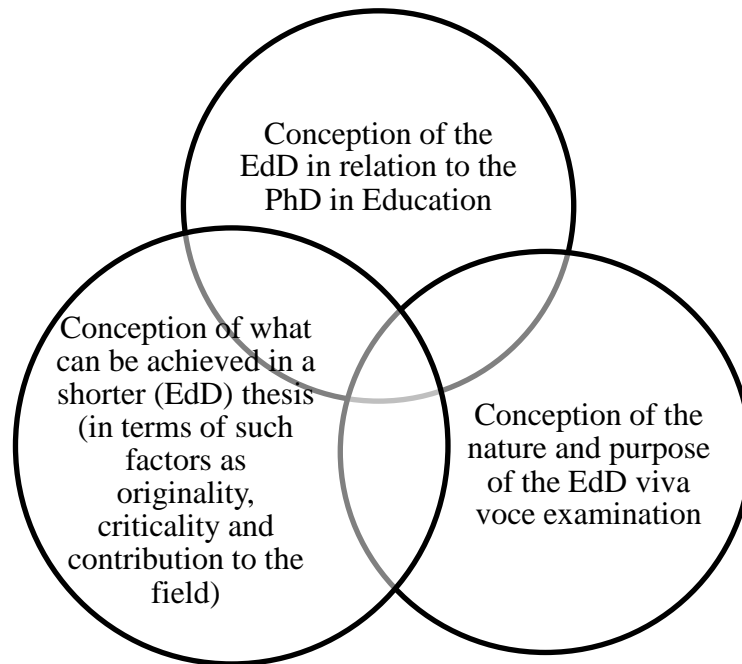
*(2) I have 'taught'/supervised/examined EdDs for some years now and I have come to the conclusion that the EdD should now be phased out. It lacks the respectability and credibility of a PhD and this is detrimentally affecting research degree standing at doctoral level.*

*(22) I think the different terms are useful as they do indicate different pathways which may be useful, for example, for employers. What is needed, however, is far greater understanding of the fact that the EdD is just as academically sound as the PhD and in no way inferior.*

*(26) 38 is a good idea. I tend to think of an EdD as more like a doctorate by thesis and coursework than as a professional qualification. Some EdD students I have supervised and examined have not been very professionally oriented at all, although they have remained more or less in the field of education. An EdD should include original research, whether it is of professional value and use or not. (27 'agree' for 38)*

*(27) Throughout your questionnaire you make no mention of the commercial aspect, although from the point of view of the University this is the main imperative for having an EdD programme. The EdD is a commodified version of a PhD. If you modularize a degree programme you can sell individual units of study, teach students in cohorts (viz. economies of scale), and increase the rapidity of turnover. It does not matter so much if some students never complete the assessment for a unit: you've already made your money from tuition fees up front. Modularization also serves the interests of the clients, who are able to buy the components one by one (i.e. in instalments), while fitting their studies around their regular jobs.*

**APPENDIX H: THREE CONSTRUCTS IN THE MINDS OF EdD ACADEMICS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO A PERSONAL CHARACTERISATION OF THE EdD**



## APPENDIX I: THE RELATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Questions	Category 1 and 3 Questionnaire Items	Interview Questions
RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?	(6). EdD programmes should aim to embed research into the practices of professional educators. (agreed) (35). Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more 'applied' and less 'theoretical'. (no majority)	1. When advising a student on which to choose, how do you characterise the main differences between the EdD and the PhD in an education area?
RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education?	(8). In assessing an EdD thesis, examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge. (no majority) (35). Compared to the PhD, the emphasis of the EdD is more 'applied' and less 'theoretical'. (no majority)	2. Do the EdD and the PhD (in an education-related area) offer the student different routes to the same skills-and-knowledge endpoint?
RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of 'originality' or 'original contribution' in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?	(33). Examiners should regard an EdD thesis as 'of publishable quality' if they can identify substantial parts of it which could be adapted into a journal paper or papers. (agreed) (8). In assessing an EdD thesis, examiners should look mainly for evidence of advanced professional knowledge. (no majority)	3. When an examiner reads a doctoral thesis s/he is looking for an original contribution to knowledge. Is this just a yes/no decision (presence or absence of an original contribution) or is it necessary for the examiner to ponder the degree/extent of originality on display?
RQ1: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the distinctiveness of the EdD, particularly as compared with the PhD in Education? RQ3: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the concepts of 'originality' or 'original contribution' in relation to the assessment of EdD theses?	(30). One should expect less 'originality' in an EdD thesis than in a PhD thesis because of the latter's greater length. (opposed) (31). EdD examiners should think in terms of a clear-cut distinction: either an EdD thesis is original or it is not. (no majority)	4. Is the concept of originality essentially the same for an EdD thesis and a PhD thesis? Doesn't the greater length of the latter offer the student greater scope for originality?
RQ2: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination?	(9). The EdD viva voce examination is vital because the candidate's understanding of his/her work must be checked. (agreed) (24). In my experience some decisions reached by EdD examiners could be described as idiosyncratic. (no majority)	5. Does the viva assess the candidate or the thesis? Is doctorateness (doctoralness) a property of the candidate, the thesis or both?

Research Questions	Category 1 and 3 Questionnaire Items	Interview Questions
RQ2: To what extent do academics teaching on EdD programmes at universities in England share a common understanding of the purposes, strengths and weaknesses of the EdD viva voce examination?	<p>(12). The EdD viva voce examination is an important means of maintaining academic standards. (agreed)</p> <p>(27). EdD viva examiners should question candidates exactly as they would a PhD candidate. (agreed)</p> <p>(28). EdD examiners should assess the viva performance of EdD candidates exactly as for PhD candidates. (agreed)</p> <p>(13). The viva voce examination is a more appropriate form of assessment for the PhD than for the EdD. (opposed)</p> <p>(14). EdD examiners should have the option of calling for a viva voce examination; it need not be compulsory. (opposed)</p> <p>(24). In my experience some decisions reached by EdD examiners could be described as idiosyncratic. (no majority)</p>	6. In your experience, do varying conceptions of the viva (each examiner, candidate) lead to misunderstanding or even friction during its conduct? If so, could you give an example of this happening?

## **APPENDIX J: EXAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (INTERVIEWEE T)**

Brian: Hello, T! Early, but are you ready to rumble?

T: yes, ready I think

Brian: Okay. I'll paste in each question one by one. Don't worry about typos - I'll tidy later. Ready?

T: yes, fine

Brian: Q1: When advising a student on which to choose, how do you characterise the main differences between the EdD and the PhD in an education area?

T: The usual criteria I would guess: the EdD is more professionally oriented and has a larger taught element (although PhDs now have more taught elements than they once did)

Brian: It has been suggested by one or two other interviewees that people who are seen as potentially weaker research students get shepherded to the EdD sometimes. Do you think this happens?

T: NO- not in my experience at all. We can be very choosy about who we take for the EdD and at recruitment stage it is certainly not seen as the weaker route.

brian: Another possibility - students sometimes are sent to the EdD because of cohort support. The PhD is seen as a lonely slog which only suits independent and resilient people. Does that happen?

T: Not so true now as most of our PhDs do have cohort support.

Brian: Okay - let's try Q2: Do the EdD and the PhD (in an education-related area) offer the student different routes to the same skills-and-knowledge endpoint?

T: Yes- the process side (i.e skills developed) and the product side (i.e the written work and hopefully eventual publications) should be equally valuable and 'make a contribution' as in your Q3

Brian: Is there any argument for saying that the EdD student actually emerges with a wider purview (because of the modules plus thesis structure)?

T: Not necessarily, No - but I am sure it can and does happen if the modules are chosen with a wider view in mind (some EdD students are allowed to choose from a very narrow range so there is no concept of a 'purview' there).

Brian: Given the overlap between EdD and PhD in terms of outcomes could an argument be made for all doctorates having the same title? eg PhD by thesis and PhD by thesis plus coursework (for EdD)?

T: Possibly, but I am not sure about the titles you use here as en e.g. - I think the keyword for the EdD is that it is a professional doctorate not that it has coursework or is 'taught' because more and more PhDs have coursework and teaching.

Brian: And for you professional doctorate means what exactly (and briefly!)?

T: Geared towards their working lives and professional interests

Brian: I'm not sure about that. My professional interests are hard to define. But anyway, let's go to Q3: When an examiner reads a doctoral thesis s/he is looking for an original contribution to knowledge. Is this just a yes/no decision (presence or absence of an original contribution to knowledge) or is it necessary for the examiner to ponder the degree/extent of originality on display?

T: NO - I think we can get into deep and murky water with originality - there are so many ways to be original and who can decide e.g. how original was some of Shakespeare's stuff or the Beatles. I think the key word is that 'they have made a CONTRIBUTION to the area.

Brian: That's interesting! But how do you assess whether or not someone has genuinely contributed? Is it just that we rely on experienced academics to know? And if so, isn't that a pre-theoretical view of doctoral assessment?

T: Most Universities have very useful criteria for doctorateness and they are written down! But it is still a matter of interpretation, yes. Sometimes people don't agree but I have done about 60 vivas now and usually people do.

Brian: So essentially it's not so different from anonymous referees deciding about whether a paper is worth publishing?

T: There are some similarities but everyone in a viva can see each other and have a decent dialogue ( the chance to shine, to explain and justify) which you do NOT get with blind peer review where some academics are downright unpleasant and uncivil.

Brian: But the decision made is essentially a value judgement by experienced people?

T: Yes, it is a value judgement even though it uses criteria (it is the same with all assessment in my view - it is both norm and criterion referenced)



Brian: Okay to Q4. About originality again, so maybe you'll give it short shrift? Is the concept of originality essentially the same for an EdD thesis and a PhD thesis? Doesn't the greater length of the latter offer the student greater scope for originality?

T: I don't like this concept as you know so I cannot answer this - the PhD thesis offers more scope in a way but overall the EdD student probably writes more over the period...

me: Okay - related question. Where does the word limit for PhDs come from? And then EdDs seem to be benchmarked (EdD assignments + EdD thesis = number of words in a PhD thesis).

T: I don't know the origin - I think about 80K max is a good limit (some are far too long)

Brian: But I just wonder whether a brilliant thesis of 60,000 or 50,000 words (for PhD) couldn't be just as doctoral?

T: it could be I am sure but the writer would have to leave out a lot of the important detail e.g. about Methods, ethics and so on.

Brian: Okay... viva questions... Q5: Does the viva assess the candidate or the thesis? Is doctorateness (doctoralness) a property of the candidate, the thesis, or both?

T: It must assess both process (candidate's own development) and product (the thesis). The concept of doctorateness lies in both process and product too

Brian: But Australian doctorates almost never involve a viva. Is that a weakness?

T: YES! The viva is a vital part of the examination process

Brian: Even when both examiners think the thesis is almost perfect?

T: Yes - the candidate should still be given the chance to shine and also to be challenged in a pleasant but thorough way

Brian: But in the latter case (chance to shine) - is it still really an examination? Or is it just a showcase?

T: Both - and why not? The candidate deserves a chance to talk in depth about her or his own work after all the effort they have put in.

Brian: Okay - finally to Q6: In your experience, do varying conceptions of the viva (each examiner, candidate) lead to misunderstanding or even friction during its conduct? If so, could you give an example of this happening?

T: In about 60 vivas I have only seen friction about 4 times and this has been due to 'bad behaviour' by one examiner e.g. being pompous; being aggressive or arrogant ( as in ' I had a hard time during my viva and I am going to do the same here..')

Brian: Yes, this has come up occasionally in my interviews with EdD lecturers. What do you think of the widely published notion of the viva as a rite of passage? Do you think that those who hold it might question more aggressively than those who see the viva more in terms of academic community building?

T: I don't understand this rite of passage thing (is it some kind of public schoolboy thing like being bathed in freezing water or being beaten?) I would never choose an External if he saw it this way or if I knew he was going to be pompous or have bees in his bonnet.

Brian: Okay, thank you so much for taking the time to do this! I will send you a cleaned up transcript tomorrow, for reference.

T: Thanks Brian, have a good day.

# APPENDIX K: TABULATED CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE SEVEN GT INTERVIEWEES

Interviewee T (6)	Interviewee U (21)	Interviewee V (1)	Interviewee W (2)	Interviewee X (15)	Interviewee Y (22)	Interviewee Z (16)
<p>The EdD is more professionally oriented than the PhD.</p> <p>The EdD has a larger taught element than the PhD.</p>	<p>The EdD offers more tutorial and peer support than the PhD.</p>	<p>The EdD offers a cohort experience (peer support).</p> <p>The EdD has a taught element: time to decide on your research area.</p>	<p>There is a different 'target audience' for EdD versus PhD.</p> <p>The structure of the EdD makes it different from the PhD.</p> <p>The EdD has a shorter thesis than the PhD.</p> <p>Difficulty level and reputation/credibility of the EdD are lower (implied).</p>	<p>Student's career plans should influence EdD v PhD choice (professional v research).</p> <p>The PhD is a lonely route, while the EdD involves collaboration.</p> <p>The EdD offer broader study; the PhD has a single focus.</p>	<p>As a professional doctorate, the EdD entails a thesis with professional impact.</p> <p>EdD has taught elements (may give support to students low on confidence).</p>	<p>The EdD has assessed modules.</p> <p>The EdD has a shorter thesis than the PhD.</p>

The EdD and the PhD take the student to a similar skills/knowledge endpoint.	The EdD and the PhD take the student to a similar skills/knowledge endpoint.	The EdD and the PhD take the student to a similar skills/knowledge endpoint.  EdD students may achieve wider awareness of research methods and methodology than PhD students.	The EdD and the PhD are <i>supposed</i> to take the student to a similar skills and knowledge endpoint, but may well not do so.  EdD graduates may have inferior research skills and understanding due to shorter thesis, taught courses.	It is more appropriate to speak of an 'equivalent' end point, since a PhD is better for a research career and EdD for a non-research career.	EdD and PhD can offer very different experiences, but also some overlaps. End result (academic achievement) is similar or the same.	EdD and PhD both require a “doctoral-level thesis” although learning is different. In Z's eyes there is “parity of esteem”.
Originality should not be used as a criterion in doctoral assessment.	Examiner should assess originality through contribution to the field.  Originality is essentially the same for both EdD and PhD.  Research can be original whether it is applied or theoretical.	Originality requires judgement from examiners; there are no absolute rules.  Understanding of 'originality' varies from EdD to EdD across Universities.	Originality has never been discussed in or outside a viva in my 16 years' experience.	Examiners must first decide if a thesis is original (yes/no).  If 'yes', examiners must next decide whether the originality is worthwhile or trivial. Also can the student support the original elements with evidence.	Ontologically one could argue a) nothing is truly original; b) in some ways all work is.  In practice, an examiner might look for: similarities to published work; impact on the professional field; originality in research design.	Originality is the same for EdD and PhD.  Both EdD and PhD thesis should advance knowledge in the field and this should be evidenced by potential in the thesis for journal papers.

		It may be a little harder to show originality in 40,000 words than 80,000.	PhD length provides more opportunities for reaching a higher standard; being more creative; developing and demonstrating more sophisticated research and intellectual skills.	The length of the PhD does not advantage PhD students. EdD topic may be narrower but the thesis should reflect a similar depth of understanding.	Originality is the same for EdD as for PhD. It has nothing whatsoever to do with numbers of words.	The PhD offers greater scope.
The viva should assess both process (candidate's development) and product (thesis).	The viva should assess thesis and candidate in relation to each other.	The thesis is more fundamental to assessment than the viva, but the latter helps enormously.	The viva is supposed to examine the candidate and her/his thesis.	The viva assesses thesis and candidate. Good viva can redeem weak thesis, and vice versa.	The viva examines the links (or otherwise) between the thesis and the candidate.	The viva examines both thesis and candidate.
Friction in vivas is caused by examiner pomposity, aggressiveness or arrogance.	Examiners' unfair questioning or inflexible standpoint can cause viva friction.	Insufficient close reading / preparation by examiners can cause friction.  Choosing the right examiners is a difficult job for supervisors.	Friction can occur outside the viva if external and internal examiners argue for different changes.	The viva can be problematic when cross-cultural issues arise or English is not the candidate's mother tongue.	Different conceptions of the viva can lead to friction. For instance, when an examiner is pompous or self-centred. The candidate should choose the examiners (questionnaire data, written comments).	No evidence of friction in EdD viva voce examinations.

## APPENDIX L: QUESTION BY QUESTION COMPARISON OF INTERVIEWEES' RESPONSES

**Question 1:** *When advising a student on which to choose, how do you characterise the main differences between the EdD and the PhD in an education area?*

Responses (T to Z)	Response Summaries (and additional relevant comments)
<b>T:</b> The usual criteria I would guess: the EdD is more professionally oriented and has a larger taught element (although PhDs now have more taught elements than they once did).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional orientation</li> <li>• Taught elements</li> <li>• <i>Does not</i> see cohort support as characteristic of the EdD - “Not so true now as most of our PhDs do have cohort support.”</li> </ul>
<b>U:</b> Main difference is in amount of support - in my opinion not just from tutor but also from group. PhD is v lonely and problematic if you are not v self motivated and also if problems with relationship between you and your tutor - EdD because it is taught offers more tutorial support and more support from your peers as a learning community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor support</li> <li>• Group support</li> <li>• PhD study is lonely</li> </ul>
<b>V:</b> The two main elements I set before candidates in interview are: that the EdD is a cohort experience, you support and are supported by a group of people; and that you have 2 years of taught courses during which to decide on your area of independent research. If a candidate has already decided on their area of research and is not worried about the loneliness of PhD study I recommend the latter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group support</li> <li>• Taught elements</li> <li>• PhD study is lonely</li> </ul>
<b>W:</b> 1 Explanations about the actual structure of the programme. 2 The length/number of words for the thesis. 3 The difficulty of one compared to the other. 4 The reputation of the qualification...and credibility... 5 The target audience for each qualification, which I think is different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure of EdD programmes</li> <li>• Thesis length</li> <li>• Comparative difficulty (EdD/PhD)</li> <li>• Reputation/credibility (EdD) - “PhD is still the gold standard...”</li> <li>• Target audience (for EdD)</li> <li>• <i>Opposes</i> the idea that group support is a defining characteristic of the EdD (“applicants choose...to apply for the EdD because they're under the mistaken views [sic] that an EdD is more supportive.”)</li> </ul>

<p><b>X:</b> I ask the student about their career plans. If they intend to follow a research path, I suggest a PhD, if a professional career (e.g. educational management) I suggest an EdD. I also consider their mode of study. The PhD is a lonely route and has only a single focus. If they wanted a broader theme to their studies and want to collaborate I suggest the EdD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career plans (research v professional)</li> <li>• PhD study is lonely</li> <li>• EdD study is broader</li> <li>• EdD study involves collaboration</li> </ul>
<p><b>Y:</b> EdD has taught elements that are statutory which a PhD does not - though there may be taught aspects to a PhD such as a research module. This can really help some students who may require either structure, some confidence in working at Doctorate level, or both.</p> <p>Obviously a PhD is usually longer (word length rather than time).</p> <p>The main aspect for me is the fact that a professional Doctorate requires an impact in the field which is not obligatory in other Docs - I see this as a strength of the EdD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taught elements</li> <li>• Programme structure (gives confidence)</li> <li>• Professional doctorates</li> <li>• Professional impact required</li> </ul>
<p><b>Z:</b> I focus on the assessment. EdD involves assessed modules. Both involve a doctoral quality thesis but the EdD thesis is 2/3 the length of a PhD thesis. I don't just go straight to assessment when talking about the 2 routes. – a bit of both, I think.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EdD assessed modules</li> <li>• Shorter EdD thesis</li> </ul>

**Question 2:** *Do the EdD and the PhD (in an education-related area) offer the student different routes to the same skills-and-knowledge endpoint?*

Responses (T to Z)	Response Summaries (and additional relevant comments)
<p><b>T:</b> Yes - the process side (i.e skills developed) and the product side (i.e the written work and hopefully eventual publications) should be equally valuable and 'make a contribution' as in your Q3.</p>	<p>Agrees.</p>
<p><b>U:</b> I think so.</p>	<p>Agrees.</p>
<p><b>V:</b> I think they do. Perhaps the EdD just edges it in terms of expertise since a PhD student in England does not have to take any courses in methodology or methods and may therefore end up with a more focused/limited knowledge based on the methodology and methods that they adopted and used.</p>	<p>Agrees – and suggests that in one respect the EdD may be superior.</p>
<p><b>W:</b> I blow hot and cold about this. I guess they're supposed to be the same endpoint, especially in the present time, since PhDs are increasingly focused on practice and EdDs of course require a reasonably sophisticated conceptualisation of the topic/area of study. I'm sceptical, however, that the EdD achieves the same level or depth of research skills/understanding as the PhD, mainly because of the length of the thesis and the taught element to the EdD.</p>	<p>Uncertain - “blows hot and cold”; appears to think that the EdD in practice may not achieve what is intended; see also W's comment elsewhere that the PhD is the gold standard.</p>
<p><b>X:</b> In some respects it is the same end point - i.e. a doctoral level qualification. However 'equivalent' end point is closer - having a PhD is better training for a research career and EdD for non-research career. Both routes bring advantage in career progression.</p>	<p>Generally 'yes'.</p>
<p><b>Y:</b> This really depends on one's view of 'endpoint' - logistically they are, by definition, different awards - so they cannot truly have exactly the same outcome, otherwise this topic would never be up for debate! The theses of each tend to differ, and not just in word count - I think the 'flavour' can differ quite considerably too, though it doesn't have to. If one's view of 'endpoint' is that one ends up</p>	<p>Generally 'yes'</p>



<p>with 'a Doctorate' then yes, you could argue that this is what happens, and yes, they are clearly different routes. My opinion is that they can offer very different experiences, but there will be some identifiable overlaps, and that the end result (in terms of academic achievement) is similar, if not the same.</p> <p><b>Z:</b> 'Sort of'. EdD supervision was a learning curve in the early years for me. To be brutally honest I did initially think the EdD was 'less than a PhD'. Now I see 'parity of esteem' but difference. One end point – a doctoral level thesis – is the same but there is different learning on the way to this end point.</p>	<p>Generally 'yes' (refers to “parity of esteem” and “one end point”) despite also signalling earlier scepticism.</p>
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**Question 3:** *When an examiner reads a doctoral thesis s/he is looking for an original contribution to knowledge. Is this just a yes/no decision (presence or absence of an original contribution) or is it necessary for the examiner to ponder the degree/extent of originality on display?*

<b>Responses (T to Z)</b>	<b>Response Summaries (and additional relevant comments)</b>
<p><b>T:</b>NO - I think we can get into deep and murky water with originality - there are so many ways to be original and who can decide e.g. how original was some of Shakespeare's stuff or the Beatles. I think the key word is that 'they have made a CONTRIBUTION to the area. [Capitals in original GT interview response].</p> <p><b>U:</b> Both I think [Remaining quotation is from a follow-up question about thesis length and originality]. I think the examiner has to look at originality in the context of the field and the amount it contributes to that field. Also, in terms of word count I did 66K for my thesis after 36K on assignments and a proposal up to that point so not much diff in word count.</p> <p><b>V:</b> That's a hard one. Education is a social science and the gate-keeping decisions, including passing or failing a PhD are the functioning of a community. So it's a judgement call for examiners, there are no hard and fast rules.</p>	<p>'No' to both parts – distrusts 'originality' as a criterion for doctorateness.</p> <p>'Yes' to both parts.</p> <p>'No' to both parts: examiners exercise their judgement and there are “no hard and fast rules” when doing so.</p>

<p><b>W:</b> I haven't been involved in doctoral work for long - only something like 15 or 16 years, but I have never had a conversation with anyone either in a viva or outside about originality! Except to mention that originality is very difficult not to demonstrate if the focus is on practice in a professional context.</p>	<p>'No' to both parts – because in W's view originality is never discussed.</p>
<p><b>X:</b> I tend to look at this as a two stage process. First of all is it original (yes/no) then consider whether the originality is worthwhile (something trivial can be original) and also can the student demonstrate/provide evidence for the originality.</p>	<p>'Yes' to both, with the two questions being contemplated by examiners in a two-stage process.</p>
<p><b>Y:</b> This is a great question - usually (as far as I know) there are guidelines for the examiner in terms of originality, so strictly speaking the examiner should abide by those irrespective of personal opinion. Ontologically one could argue the two extremes - that nothing can be truly original, or that pretty much everything is on a certain level. In reality I (as examiner) would be looking somewhere in between and (in addition to or in the case of absence of guidance) would be bearing the following in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are there significant similarities between the thesis and other completed research papers? If so, this may make me question the originality.</li> <li>◆ Is there an original contribution to the professional field - if not, I would question the originality.</li> <li>◆ If the theme is clearly not original are there aspects of originality elsewhere, such as in the research design, the research group (e.g. participants), location etc. [Bullets in original GT interview response].</li> </ul>	<p>Generally appears to accept that originality is important and should be searched for by examiners.</p>
<p><b>Z:</b> At Z University officially (and me personally) the answer is YES. Both EdD and PhD should advance knowledge in the field and this should be manifest through pretty clear potential for actual journal papers (with named journals in mind) in the submitted thesis. Some of my colleagues and/or external examiners may, of course, have lower expectations of EdD theses.</p>	<p>Appears to indicate 'yes' in general.</p>

**Question 4:** *Is the concept of originality essentially the same for an EdD thesis and a PhD thesis? Doesn't the greater length of the latter offer the student greater scope for originality?*

<b>Responses (T to Z)</b>	<b>Response Summaries (and additional relevant comments)</b>
<b>T:</b> I don't like this concept as you know so I cannot answer this - the PhD thesis offers more scope in a way but overall the EdD student probably writes more over the period...	Rejects 'originality' as a criterion for EdD thesis assessment.
<b>U:</b> Yes I think so. [And then in answer to a follow-up question] Research is original independent of whether or not it is related to practice or just blue sky stuff for me.	Appears to regard 'originality' as the same for both EdD thesis and PhD thesis ("Yes, I think so."). Next answer perhaps implies that greater length does not offer greater scope for originality?
<b>V:</b> I believe it varies from EdD to EdD across Universities. I was at a meeting the other day where there was talk of 'taught EdDs and research EdDs'. Ours is definitely a research EdD. I suppose it may be a little harder to show originality in 40k words as against 80k but there's not much in it.	Interpretation of this may vary across universities. Final comment ("I suppose...in it") suggests marginal acceptance that the PhD thesis offers a better opportunity to "show originality".
<b>W:</b> I think the PhD length provides more opportunities for reaching a higher standard; being more creative; developing and demonstrating more sophisticated research and intellectual skills.	W appears to think that originality in an EdD thesis will be less developed or inferior because "PhD length provides more opportunities for reaching a higher standard" in several ways. No clear response to the first part, yes to the second.
<b>X:</b> It's the same. The length of the PhD should not give PhD students an advantage. The topic may be narrower but the thesis should reflect a similar depth of understanding. The length of the PhD can be a disadvantage.	Yes to the first part, no to the second.
<b>Y:</b> Yes to the former - absolutely no to the latter. Originality has nothing whatsoever to do with numbers of words.	Yes, to the first part, no to the second.
<b>Z:</b> Re first question. Yes. Basically the same answer as for Q3 above. Re 2 <sup>nd</sup> question. I do think the PhD offers greater scope and I also think students see it the wrong way when they begin ... I'll explain. 300 pages (PhD) and 200 pages (EdD) seems very long when you start but if the thesis goes well, the student wants	Yes to both parts.

more pages, not less. This hits the EdD students harder than PhD students. In terms of evidence for this ... I'm pretty sure the number of requests to exceed the standard maximum length of the thesis is much, much higher for EdD students.	
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**Question 5:** *Does the viva assess the candidate or the thesis? Is doctorateness (doctoralness) a property of the candidate, the thesis, or both?*

<b>Responses (T to Z)</b>	<b>Response Summaries (and additional relevant comments)</b>
<p><b>T:</b> It must assess both process (candidate's own development) and product (the thesis). The concept of doctorateness lies in both process and product too</p> <p><b>U:</b> Ah the viva - mine was awful - it should assess both in relation to each other and both for the second bit of the q</p> <p><b>V:</b> This question does not differentiate between EdD and PhD, I'm sure you realise that. I would have a problem answering if you were expecting some differences, as none of my students has yet reached that EdD stage (I have had about 15 PhD students complete). There should be 3 by the end of 2011 but none yet. My only experience as an examiner of an EdD is one at Durham, though I have examined more than 40 PhDs elsewhere. In fact you only have the thesis, you don't 'have' the person. You try to read the person through the thesis. The viva helps enormously, though I have examined several PhDs for Australia and South Africa where you send off your comments and that's it. You don't meet the candidate at all. So you try to judge the person but you have to justify your decision on the basis of the thesis.</p>	<p>Both; both</p> <p>Both; both</p> <p>Appears to favour 'both' for each part of the question, but seems to regard the thesis as paramount ("you only have the thesis, you don't 'have' the person"; "you try to judge the person but you have to justify your decision on the basis of the thesis" - although this second comment could refer <i>only</i> to V's experience of examining Australian and South African doctorates).</p>

<p><b>W:</b> Good question. The viva is supposed to examine the candidate and her/his thesis, so I'm not too sure that there is any clarity here about this. Except, of course, the qualification is awarded to the candidate and not the thesis...that's why it's you that will be called Dr Poole and not some collection of paper on your bookshelf!</p>	<p>Some uncertainty (“good question”; “not too sure that there is any clarity here”). In the end (rather jokily) seems to argue that ultimately doctorateness relates to the <i>candidate</i>, not the thesis.</p>
<p><b>X:</b> Both. A good performance at the viva by the candidate can compensate for a weak thesis, and vice versa.</p>	<p>Both; both</p>
<p><b>Y:</b> In a sense the viva examines the links (or otherwise) between the thesis and the candidate. In as such it is not really possible to separate the two. However, one could argue that there could be certain leanings whereby the candidate is assessed on one way, and the thesis another. So, the candidate is assessed thus:</p> <p>Is the thesis the candidate's work? Does the candidate understand the thesis? Can the candidate fully defend the work?</p> <p>The thesis is then examined thus:</p> <p>Is it within guidelines (e.g. word length, referencing etc.)? Does it meet the requirements of an EdD (e.g. contribution to knowledge, originality, etc.)? Is each section appropriately written - i.e. to an acceptable depth, criticality, robustness etc.? Are research question apt and is there an acceptable attempt at answering them? Is there necessary cohesion throughout? The 'doctoralness' must be a combination of (at least) all of the above.</p>	<p>This is quite a full answer. Y begins by saying that “it is not really possible to separate” the thesis and the candidate. When Y lists ways in which the candidate is assessed, all three points include reference to “the thesis” or “the work”. A longer list (six questions) then outlines how Y sees the thesis being assessed (none of which mention the candidate).</p> <p>I therefore see Y's response as being 'both' to both parts of the question. But Y seems to place greater emphasis on the thesis.</p>
<p><b>Z:</b> This is easy ... ‘BOTH’ is the answer to both questions.</p>	<p>Both; both</p>

**Question 6:** *In your experience, do varying conceptions of the viva (each examiner, candidate) lead to misunderstanding or even friction during its conduct? If so, could you give an example of this happening?*

<b>Responses (T to Z)</b>	<b>Response Summaries (and additional relevant comments)</b>
<p><b>T:</b> In about 60 vivas I have only seen friction about 4 times and this has been due to 'bad behaviour' by one examiner e.g. being pompous; being aggressive or arrogant (as in 'I had a hard time during my viva and I am going to do the same here..')</p>	<p>T appears to attribute “friction” in vivas to “bad behaviour” by one examiner rather than to varying conceptions of the viva.</p>
<p><b>U:</b> Not necessarily during its conduct though my supervisor got pretty cross in the meeting after with the examiners as he felt they had been unfair as did the head of research - I wasn't brave enough or experienced enough to q them during it - there's a feeling that if you haven't quoted your external enough they can get a bit 'precious' about it - also happened to a friend of mine. They gave me major modifications which took me only a few hours to do, then argued over them, then failed to mark it because of a strike, their idea of major was not mine, things like changing the order of the words in a heading, errr, changing a title here and there and so on</p>	<p>U has no experience as an EdD examiner (one to four years of experience as an EdD academic) and so recounts what happened in relation to her own viva (as an EdD candidate). Alleges some friction <i>after</i> the viva. Also suggests that external examiners can be obstreperous “if you haven't quoted (their work) enough”. Very anecdotal in nature.</p>
<p><b>V:</b> Yes. It's a tough job for a supervisor to choose the right examiners, people who will be fair in their judgements. I have made some mistakes in my choices before. I have seen examiners criticise a candidate for not having done something, and then the candidate has said please turn to page x and you will see I have done that.</p>	<p>V has seen 'friction' (“Yes”). Appears to see this as caused mainly by two factors: difficulty (for the supervisor) of choosing an examiner “who will be fair in...judgements”; examiners who are not well prepared / have not read the thesis carefully enough (“I have seen...done that”).</p>
<p><b>W:</b> I've never experienced any tension due to differing views about the viva. All appear to expect that the candidate will be questioned about the lack of clarity in the thesis and issues that have arisen during the initial reading by the examiners. Standards, yes, however. On some occasions, external will want certain changes, on others internal will expect different changes. Not always in agreement</p>	<p>W has <i>not</i> experienced tension/friction due to differing conceptions of the viva. In his experience any such tension may arise because the internal and external examiners argue for “different changes”.</p>

<p>which changes are the most important or which are really needed.</p> <p><b>X:</b> There are other problems. I have experience of a Japanese woman who could not bring herself to challenge the authority of the examiners and hardly spoke. The examiners wrongly concluded that she did not understand the questions. I also have experience of non-native speakers misunderstanding questions and giving the wrong answers or misreading the cultural expectations and irritating the examiner (e.g. lack of deference). These things do not always lead to problems.</p> <p><b>Y:</b> Absolutely it can - what irritates me is when an examiner seems to think the process is about her/him, and not the candidate. Irrespective of views about the research area, the examiners role is to go through a fairly clear process in identifying key aspects (see 5). Aside from this there should be little or no personal influences; sadly, though, examiners sometimes seem to feel the need to bring their own agenda to the viva which I think is very unfair. I don't have personal experience of this but have heard of other individuals being present (as candidate or examiner) where conflicts have arisen as a result of one examiner not particularly liking an aspect of the thesis - when it is not about liking and more to do with academic rigour.</p> <p><b>Z:</b> My answer is 'NO', so I do not have an example to provide. I should say that my experience is not extensive, I have 4 successful EdD students and 10 successful PhD students (and no fails!) behind me.</p>	<p>X appears to regard the question of differing conceptions of the viva as unimportant ("There are other problems"). Seems to regard the viva as most problematic when cross-cultural issues arise or the candidate has English as a foreign language.</p> <p>Y has "less than one year" of experience as an EdD academic (volunteered when completing the questionnaire) but has acted as an EdD external examiner. Agrees that differing conceptions of the viva can cause friction ("Absolutely it can"). The main issues in Y's view are: self-centred or self-important behaviour by examiners ("examiner seems...about him/her"; "examiners sometimes...very unfair"). However is <i>all</i> of this via hearsay? See: "I don't have personal experience of this..." - does 'this' mean the whole account or just what is described in the last sentence? Note that Y has never been an internal examiner.</p> <p>No.</p>
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## **APPENDIX M: NOTES ON RESPONSES TO ‘QUESTIONING INTERVENTIONS’**

### **Interviewee T**

- in his/her experience “weaker” students are not shepherded to the EdD (“not in my experience at all”)
- the suggestion that EdD study involves stronger cohort support is “not so true now as most of our PhDs do have cohort support”
- it is not necessarily the case that an EdD graduate will emerge with a “wider purview” (researcher's phrase echoed) than the PhD graduate because of the modules plus thesis structure (since some EdDs have a restricted choice of modules)
- the suggestion of one award title for all doctorates cannot be ruled out (“possibly”)
- “the keyword for the EdD is that it is a professional doctorate not that it has coursework” - but for an opposing view, see respondent 14's comments on questionnaire item 28: “When (names own university)'s EdD was created in (gives year) the notion of a 'professional doctorate' hadn't been invented, and we described the EdD as a modular doctorate. Since then the umbrella term 'professional doctorate' has been visited on all EdDs, bringing with it an implication that there might be a 'professional' element to the content and the assessment. I personally do not feel that that this is / should be a major distinguishing factor between PhDs and EdDs...”
- ultimately doctoral assessment is “a matter of interpretation” and has “some similarities” with the anonymous refereeing of journal papers – although a difference is that “in a viva people can see each other and have a decent dialogue...which you do NOT get with blind peer review where some academics are downright unpleasant and uncivil.” (Upper-case in original). Doctoral assessment involves “a value judgement even though it uses criteria...it is both norm and criterion referenced”.
- 80,000 words is “a good limit” for a PhD thesis “(some are far too long)”.
- it might be possible to write a brilliant PhD thesis of 50 or 60,000 words “but the writer would have to leave out a lot of...important detail”.
- leaving the viva out of the doctoral assessment process (as in Australia) would be a weakness: “The viva is a vital part of the examination process”.
- the viva is still required when a thesis is excellent because the candidate is “given the chance to shine” and “deserves the chance to talk in depth about her or his own work...”
- the view of the doctoral viva as a “rite of passage” is incomprehensible (“I don't understand this rite of passage thing”) and not to be trusted (“I would never appoint an External if he saw it this way... is it some kind of public schoolboy thing like being bathed in freezing water or being beaten?”).

### **Interviewee U**

- the main factor in whether a person registers for EdD or PhD is “informed student choice”
- it is possible that the “weaker research student” is referred to the EdD sometimes but that s/he does not “really think that the EdD is easier than a PhD”
- the EdD should not be seen as “broader” in field of study than the PhD-holder



- the PhD does not necessarily provide a better appreciation of a wider range of research methods or greater scope to demonstrate this in the longer thesis-only
- originality in the EdD thesis should be seen as “originality in the context of the field” and “the amount it contributes to the field”
- the presence or absence originality is not in any way related to whether a thesis is more 'theoretical' or more 'applied'
- arguments between doctoral examiners may not be “uncommon” (on the basis of briefing at an internal university course on doctoral supervision and viva examination)
- sees the unpredictability of external examiners (“until you've used them”) as a possible obstacle to 'fairness' in the viva
- does not see the PhD as the 'gold standard', but suggests that there is no strong evidence for holding either this view or the contrary position (“very subjective”)
- sees the term 'professional doctorate' as having second-rate connotations “because it pulls away from being 'academic”)

### **Interviewee V**

- the EdD must be professionally based, but “in practice” most PhDs are too (this may reflect practice at the subject's own university)
- it is true that, in essence, in the field of education, experienced academics are trusted to judge what is or isn't doctoral) whereas in other fields (such as medicine) publication might be required. “All publishing in education is a matter of reviewers accepting or rejecting and the same goes for PhDs and EdDs.” (Compare T's comments above on doctoral assessment *versus* journal publication, with a slightly different emphasis: ultimately doctoral assessment is “a matter of interpretation” and has “some similarities” with the anonymous refereeing of journal papers.)
- EdD assessment (number of words in assignments plus number of words in thesis) is calculated to approximate closely to the number of words in a PhD thesis – and this is “to help make for equality as far as possible” (again this may be a comment on practice in the subject's own university – the pronoun “we” is used)
- “the viva is very important” because “I have seen people salvage their PhD because they presented themselves and their work well under questioning.”
- the reason (historically) why Australian doctorates do not normally have vivas is because “the community was too small and intimate to be able to provide the distance an examiner needs, but that's not the case any more...I'd like to see Australia go over to vivas.”
- the fact that a viva can be “almost a coronation” (researcher's words) or, conversely, involve “pointed questioning” (researcher's words) does *not* cause misunderstanding. Excellent thesiss lead to “talk about the work” whereas “more worrying” thesiss need strong questioning to determine where the strengths are – leading to revision and “a much better piece of work”
- it is important to “guard against” students perceived as 'weaker' being steered to the EdD (but, by using the term “guard against” perhaps implies that it may nevertheless happen)

- the term 'professional doctorate' is helpful in “encouraging people to think of themselves as able to do it”

### **Interviewee W**

- the PhD is the gold standard and, for “many”, the EdD is “the poorer relation”
- “the majority of the EdD gang” (used pejoratively?) “would not acknowledge the second-class-ness” (sic) of the EdD
- it is mainly those outside “the professional doctorate context” who see the PhD as “having more status”
- the EdD probably does not give a superior experience than the PhD (because of possible coverage of a wider range of topics) – though it “depends on the programme”
- rather than originality, criticality, structure, scholarly-ness (sic), clear arguments based on evidence and claims, and clear research questions answered through completion of a thesis, should be seen as the hallmarks of doctorateness/doctoralness
- the EdD would “not really” achieve a stronger reputation as an award through having a longer thesis, as “there is still the issue of the taught element which counts towards the award” - recall that this subject strongly agreed with questionnaire item 2, endorsing the view that the more taught elements a doctorate has, the more it departs from the gold standard
- removing the EdD viva would make it “a lot more attractive but less enjoyable. For the examiners that is.” (This is ambiguous, but I take it to mean “more attractive” to candidates but “less enjoyable” to examiners)
- the absence of viva voce examinations for Australian doctorates does not weaken their standing
- in cases where the thesis is almost faultless, the thesis could be waived – and this is justified/supported by an anecdote from personal experience as an examiner. Feedback to the candidate could be sent via post or email instead
- “weaker students” are not normally shepherded to the EdD; nor is it true that EdD students get more support (tutor, cohort) than do PhD students. However, “applicants choose themselves to apply for the EdD because they're under the *mistaken* views (sic) that an EdD is more supportive” (my italics)

### **Interviewee X**

- 'weaker' students are not, and should not be, directed to the EdD
- the EdD and PhD should be regarded as of equal standing but as useful/required for different purposes (“Yes, I agree”)
- differences in standing of universities and of supervisors also affect how an EdD or PhD earned by an individual is viewed – it is not just the doctorate type
- originality in a thesis is often observed by comparing the literature review (what is already known) with what is attempted. Has the student developed or contradicted what is already known?

- “subjectivity is unavoidable in any form of assessment” but the fact that there are two examiners (internal and external) reduces the unreliability of judgements at the viva
- criticality is just as important as originality in an education doctorate
- universities “vary in the extent to which they are prepared to write criteria for the assessment of doctorateness”
- “There are times when the thesis is so good that the result is announced to the student at the beginning of the Viva”
- the viva (in X's experience) can have “surprising outcomes” - that is it can reverse the view of the thesis taken by the examiners beforehand (fail to pass, pass to fail)
- the viva is “on the whole...reliable” as a means of assessment
- a flaw relating to the viva is the fact that supervisors “have an enormous freedom to influence the selection of examiners and this can influence the outcome”
- a short definition of doctorateness should include references to: “an original contribution to knowledge, building on what is known...clarity of thought, coherence and depth of understanding”

### **Interviewee Y**

- an EdD thesis should have “an identifiable impact, or potential for impact” in “the student's professional area”
- assessment of this “impact” should be “an obligatory part of the viva”
- an EdD graduate and a PhD graduate emerge with similar skills/knowledge: “I see no disparity at an academic level”
- the experience of study for both EdD and PhD is “extremely individual” and dependent on many factors, so that “there can be no justifiable argument to say that one program (sic) over the other will definitely provide a superior experience”
- the issue of 'originality of contribution' can be a source of idiosyncratic judgements by examiners
- guidance provided by universities for examiners should be “less interpretative” because “having examiners base decisions on their own interpretations is unfair on the candidate, and potentially quite inequitable from one student's viva to another”
- the longer PhD thesis does *not* allow a candidate more opportunity to demonstrate originality: “one is original or not, you can't be more original or less so”
- doing away with the EdD viva would not weaken the standing of the award (“not in the slightest...I see no real reason to have a viva, it doesn't strengthen the actual thesis in any way as far as I can tell. The examiner could quite easily pose their (sic) queries / demand amendments without a viva.” Note also that in written comments on the questionnaire this subject says “Personally I quite enjoyed my viva – but am not quite sure if it was a necessary part of the process.”)
- there is “not really” any strength in the argument that the viva is less valid for the EdD than the PhD on the basis that academic debate is more likely to be a feature of the PhD-holder's future career than of the EdD-holder's (“I'm not in the slightest bit convinced that...anyone who has been through a viva would suggest that it is useful for the world of academia – aside from being able to empathise with their own Doc students”). However this view seems to be in conflict somewhat with comments

given by the same subject on the questionnaire about a year earlier: “If the Doctoral process is intended to assist students in defending their work then perhaps the viva is of some use – however, for many taking a professional Doctorate this may not be a useful skill.”

- examiners should be chosen by the student: “I definitely believe that with appropriate advice from supervisors it should be the student's decision should they choose to make it...I feel very strongly about this...the idea that it should be more a supervisor's decision than a student's is appalling.”

## **Interviewee Z**

- consciously or unconsciously s/he may refer 'weaker students' to the EdD (“Yes”)
- in only about 20% of cases in Z's university are students counselled about the choice of EdD v PhD and students perceived to be weak are subject to “pretty much blanket rejection”
- s/he did think initially that the EdD was inferior to the PhD but now sees “parity of esteem but difference”
- feels that this 'parity of esteem' view is “pretty much reflected in colleagues” at his/her university, but “maybe wider afield colleagues do not agree”
- the EdD student and PhD student experience “different learning” - for example the PhD student “usually comes with...a pretty good proposal” whereas the EdD student generally presents “a much less detailed proposal” so that the first 12-18 months must be devoted to “bringing him/her 'up to speed' especially for me in the academic focus”
- it may be the case (“I hope not but it is quite possible”) that “some of my colleagues and/or external examiners may...have lower expectations of EdD theses” - goes on to suggest that this might be “subconsciously”
- s/he is unsure whether the EdD thesis should be closer to standard PhD length: “There are many aspects of my work as PGRT (presumably postgraduate research tutor, BP) where I just accept 'what is'...it would be a lot of paperwork to change things”
- s/he examined an Australian PhD about six years previously and thought the assessment procedure inferior (no viva): “I actually like the UK system where we can grill the student and also backtrack and say comforting words if it looks like they're freaking” but “maybe I'm just defending what I'm used to”
- although conscious of the dangers of stereotyping, the viva is different for each of “the brilliant thesis”, “the middling thesis” and “weak theses”: first category - “this is brilliant, basically I just want to establish that you wrote it”, then “deep intellectual discussion” and almost always talk of publications; second category – looking for “excellent bits to put in the report to justify passing” and “scrapping away at how to improve” sections deemed to be less good; third category - “so varied that I won't even begin to generalise”
- “in any thesis I'm looking for potential journal papers”
- his/her university regards the EdD as a professional doctorate, but s/he sees things as more “person-based”, with the examples given suggesting that the modular nature of the EdD may make it “better than a PhD” for some students, by reason of personal background or future work

- on the nature of 'professional doctorates' (PDs): “it's a question of ontology...a PD exists via institutional rules. Does a PD (as distinct from a non-PD?!) exist in actual activity? I don't know but suspect not”